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Mrs. E. Whitlock

Aug. 1st 1898

=Chorley

Ann

MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

HER LITERARY CHARACTER

FROM HER

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

BY HENRY F. CHORLEY.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD.

1836.

THE NEW YORK
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THIS edition of Mrs. HEMANS' Memorials is published for the pecuniary benefit of her Family.

AMERICAN PUBLISHERS.

TO

HENRY AND CHARLES HEMANS,

THESE

MEMORIALS

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In offering these Memorials to the public, I am anxious that their character should not be mistaken—that my work should not be measured by too high a standard. I cannot better guard against such a mischance than by stating the circumstances under which it was planned and executed.

It is now twelve months ago, since I collected and published, in the "Athenæum," a few sketches and remembrances of one whom I had known intimately during the later years of her life. The general interest excited by these papers—or rather by the vivacity and elegance of the letters which they contained—led me to contemplate their extension and republication. While the work was in progress, however, my store of materials was so liberally enriched by the kindness of known and unknown friends, that these Memorials were imperceptibly extended beyond the period of my own personal acquaintance with Mrs. Hemans; and I found myself enabled, by linking together correspondence and anecdote with slight notices of her published works, to trace out the entire progress of her mind through its several stages. To this task I have exclusively confined myself, purposely refraining from touching upon any such details of the delicate circumstances of her domestic life, as were not necessary to the illustration of her literary career. I have therefore of necessity fallen short of the completeness essential to a regular biography.

It now only remains for me to offer my most cordial and respectful acknowledgments to all who have lent me their assistance;—to say that I have felt even more grateful for the trust reposed in me by many to whom I am personally a stranger, than for the value and variety of the materials they have graciously placed at my disposal. Those who may read the following pages, will be able to judge of the extent of my two-fold obligation.

London, August 1*st*, 1836.

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MEMORIALS

OF

MRS. HEMANS.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Notices of Mrs. Hemans' family, birth, and infancy—Her residence in Wales—Anecdotes of her childhood—Her admiration of military glory—Visit to London—Letter to her Aunt—Notice of her earliest Poems, with extracted specimens.

It was our divine Milton, who, wisely as forcibly, laid down the principle "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter, in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition of the best and honorablest things." Often as this golden wisdom has been neglected by our poets—often as passion, or frivolity, or—worst of all—a mean love of gain and worldly advancement—have spoiled and silenced the song, and, as it were, quenched the altar-fire of those whose voices would otherwise have been heard long after they were no more, whose light might at once have led and warmed the hearts of future generations—in the many exceptions, no less than the few examples, Milton's precept holds good as a rule. The works of the *really* gifted (passing over those clever mechanists who can effect every form and feeling with equal ease and absence of sincerity) *must*, in some sort, mirror their lives: and he who reads with the mind and not merely with the

senses, will find in them the weakness and the strength, the tastes and the antipathies of their writers clearly indicated —the tenor at least, if not the separate incidents of their history, distinctly set forth.

It is a fascinating and worthy task to follow out the entire subject in its widest range,—to trace not merely the connexion of the poet's utterances with his own fortunes, but to exhibit them as illustrating the progress of his art,—and that art, the destinies of the human race. It is noble to go back to the most dim and ancient times, and to perceive how Poetry has at once been the guide and the harbinger of mankind on its onward march. It is most exciting, while we stand still upon the present, and look around and before us, to speculate upon its future progress and direction; whether we join those be-praisers of the past, who can only see evil to come, in their lament that

> . . . . Poesy is on the wane,
> We shall not find her haunts again!

or whether with the more sanguine (perhaps more visionary) race of hopers,* we rejoice in the hope of its possessing a

* Elle (La Poésie) ne sera plus lyrique dans le sens où nous prenons ce mot; elle n'a pas assez de jeunesse, de fraicheur, de spontanéité d'impression pour chanter comme au premier reveil de la pensée humaine. Elle ne sera plus épique, l'homme a trop vecu, trop reflechi, pour se laisser amuser, interesser par les longs recits de l'epopee, et l'experience a detruit sa foi aux merveilles dont le poéme epique enchantait sa credulite. Elle ne sera plus dramatique, parceque la scène de la vie reelle a, dans nos temps de liberte et d'action politique, un interêt plus pressant, plus reel et plus in time que la scène du theâtre; parceque les classes elevees de la societe ne sont pas au theâtre pour être emues, mais pour juger, parceque la societe est devenue critique de naive qu'elle etait. Il n'y a plus de bonne foi dans les plaisirs. . . . La poesie sera de la raison chantee, voilà sa destinee pour long temps; elle sera religieuse, politique, sociale comme les epoques que le genre humain va traverser; elle sera intime surtout, personnelle, meditative et grave; non plus un jeu d'esprit, un caprice melodieux, de la pensee legère et superficielle, mais l'echo profond, reel, sincere des plus hautes conceptions de l'intelligence, de plus mysterieuses impression de l'âme. . . . La poesie s'est depouillee deplus en plus de sa forme artificielle, elle n'a presque plus de forme qu'elle même. . . . Mais sera-t-elle morte pour être plus vraie, plus sincère, plus reele qu'elle ne le fut jamais? Non, sans doute, elle aura plus de vie, plus d'intensite, plus d'action, qu'elle n'en eût encore! . . . . Je ne vois aucun signe de décadence dans l'intelligence humaine, aucun symptôme de lassitude ni de vieillesse; je vois des institutions vieillies qui s'ecroulent, mais des generations rajeunies que le souffle de la vie tourmente et pousse en tous sens, et qui reconstruiront, sur des plans inconnus, cette œuvre infinie que Dieu a donne à faire et à refaire sans cesse à l'homme, sa propre destinee. Dans cette œuvre la poesie a sa place, quoique Pluton la voulût bannir!—*De Lamartine. Destinées de la Poésie.*

wider field and being crowned with loftier triumphs than any it has yet occupied or won—we expect that, inasmuch as universality is becoming a decided feature in the mind of the age, the inspired ones who shall next arise, will be more genially wise, more liberally endowed, than any who have blazed their hour in the world, or mused their hour apart from it, in the past days of conflict and atagonism—we anticipate that in their works the strongest passion will be displayed, blended with and balanced by the most constraining reverence for what is calm and holy; while, on the other hand, Meditation, as it were, will be drawn down from too long a tarriance on those starry heights whence she loves, alone, to look up to heaven, by the golden cords of a brotherly love which shall embrace the weak and the strong, the ignorant as well as the intellectual. But these are themes which require time and space and experience beyond my powers—though to allude to them may not be considered as altogether impertinent, when it is remembered that in the pages which follow, I am making a contribution to the annals of English Poetry; and to that chapter in particular, which, besides its intrinsic interest, has a significance as illustrating the spirit of the age,—I mean the one which shall treat of the popularity and prevalence of female authorship.

With regard to its popularity, it would indeed be shameful if, with the long list we possess of names, excellent in the literature of romance, art, criticism, nay, even in the exact sciences, whose paths it might be thought were too uninviting and arduous to be pursued with steadiness and success by female feet; the contemptuous party-words formerly wielded in attack and defence were to be heard among us any more. If we are not prepared to admit that genius is of no sex; to hold with some intemperate enthusiasts, who plead their *right* to take up the lion's skin and club, and assuming the stern and peculiar cares of manhood, would (unwarned by the disastrous example of England's wisest king in the neatherd's cot) condemn the poor lords of the creation to the small cares of housewifery; we are willing, we are thankful to acknowledge, that in our graver, and gayer hours, we have found females, whose services, if not peformed by them, must have remained unfulfilled. "If"—to quote one* who wrote eloquently in defence of, and apology for, her own sex; "we still secretly dread and dislike female talent, it is not for the reason generally supposed, because it may tend to obscure our own regal honours; but because it interferes with our implanted and imbibed ideas of domestic life and

* Miss Jewsberry.

womanly duty." But this prejudice (let us not inquire whether or not it may have been based upon experience) is fading rapidly away. With the increase of female authorship, a change has taken place in the position of the authors. Our gifted women must feel themselves less alone in the world than was formerly their case; they have therefore daily less and less cause to despise its ordinances, to claim toleration for eccentricity of habits as well as latitude of opinion; and thus they are winning day by day, in addition to the justice of head commanded by their high and varied powers, the justice of heart which is so eminently their due.

On all these grounds, a work which shall trace out the career of a poetess, may not be altogether uninteresting or unseasonable at the present time. That the subject of the following memorials deserves to rank high among the bright names of English song will not be questioned; and I think that they will be found at once to throw a new light upon, and to harmonize, with the spirit of the writings which the world has so deservedly recognized. It is hardly necessary to say (but I would fain escape the charge of self-complacency) that the value of such a record as mine must lie in its materials, and that the only merit an editor can claim is that of just and modest taste in their arrangement. If I shall be thought to have failed in this, the fault is not one of carelessness, still less of presumption.

Felicia Dorothea Browne—the second daughter and the fourth child of a family of three sons and three daughters, was born in Duke street, Liverpool, on the 25th of September, 1794. Her father was a native of Ireland, belonging to a branch of the Sligo family; her mother, a Miss Wagner, was a descendant of a Venetian house, whose old name Veniero, had in the course of time been corrupted into this German form. Among its members were numbered three who rose to the dignity of Doge, and one who bore the honourable rank of commander at the battle of Lepanto. In the waning days of the Republic, Miss Browne's grandfather held the humbler situation of Venetian Consul in Liverpool. The maiden name of his wife was Haddock, a good and ancient one among the yeomanry of Lancashire; three of the issue of this union are still surviving. To these few genealogical notices it may be added, that Felicia Dorothea was the fifth bearing that Christian name in her mother's family, that her elder sister Eliza, of whom affectionate mention is made in her earliest poems, died of a decline at the age of eighteen; and that her brother Claude, who reached manhood, died in

America several years ago. Two brothers older than herself, and one sister, her junior, are therefore, all that now survive.

Even if, in considering the history of a mind, we are to set aside the supposed influence of the *force du sang* as a popular fallacy, it is still impossible to determine how far and how soon the mere recital of the stately names of her maternal ancestry may have impressed one, so early impressible as the subject of these memorials. Mrs. Hemans would often, half playfully, half proudly, allude to her origin as accounting for the strong tinge of romance which, from infancy, pervaded every thought, word and aspiration of her daily life; and for that remarkable instinct towards the beautiful, which rarely forms so prominent a feature in the character of one wholly English born. She was wont to say, that though the years of childhood are for the most part years of happiness, hers were too visionary, too much haunted by impressions and fantasies, not to form an exception to the rule. Had she lived she would fully have described the sensations of that vague hope mounting almost to ecstasy, and of that fear, more vague, so closely linked with superstition, which often trouble even the infancy of those endowed with a quick, poetic temperament; she would have displayed the unexplained want in their hearts, which is born with such; the sense, which suggests a hidden meaning and a mystery to be fathomed in things which to others appear common and tangible; for she was meditating a work partly imaginative, partly real, to be called "Recollections of a Poet's Childhood," at the time when her labours were bidden to cease for ever.

As a child she was an object almost of devotion, for her extreme beauty; her complexion was remarkably brilliant; her hair long, curling and golden:—in the latter years of her life its hue deepened into brown, but it remained silken, and profuse, and wavy, to the last. She was one of those, too, who may be said to be born and nurtured in the midst of prophecies. Who can tell how little or how much impression passing words carelessly spoken may make upon one so sensitive?—One lady incautiously observed, in her heaaring, "That child is not made for happiness, I know; her colour comes and goes too fast." She never forgot this remark, and would mention it as having caused her much pain at the time when it was spoken.

Her tastes and dispositions were encouraged by her mother,

herself possessed of many endowments and accomplishments; amongst others, of the delightful talent of reading aloud well. I have been told that she could continue this even as she walked. Mrs. Hemans always spoke, and, it will be seen, *wrote* with enthusiastic affection of her parent: it was to her that her earliest attempts at composition were confided. These, produced at the age of seven years, were of course nothing but repetitions of what she had read and heard—moulded and uttered by that spirit which in very young children only shows its presence by its restlessness. Hannah Moore used to play at "riding to London, to talk to bishops and booksellers," Felicia Browne found her chief delight in reciting poems, and fragments of plays. Douglas was in these days a particular favourite with her—and an old nursery looking upon the sea, a large dimly-lighted room, was the scene of her rehearsals. The excellence of her memory showed itself early—"'Why, Felice, you cannot have read that,' I was wont to say," writes one who overlooked her infancy. "'O yes! I have, and I will repeat it to you'—and she would do this, almost supernaturally."

The plan of these memorials has precluded the possibility of a close inquiry into the domestic history of these years; and I regret that I cannot enrich my pages with a few anecdotes of her youth, such as I well remember Mrs. Hemans telling, which have now vexatiously escaped from memory. One or two characteristic notices, however, in addition to the above, have collected themselves. From one lady, who was surprised into tears upon meeting her unexpectedly in society, and contrasting her somewhat faded but expressive features with the girlish beauty she had admired many years before—I have learned that the interest excited by her talents and attractions, when quite a child, was remarkable; not merely in her own family, but likewise among those who, from their sober years and habits, might hardly be expected to sympathize much with the flights and fancies of a young genius, however beautiful. One gentleman who took a kind and efficient interest in the publication of her earliest poems, talked so much and so warmly about her, that his sister used to say: "Brother, you must be in love with that girl!" to which he would answer: "If I were twenty years younger I would marry her!" And a sprightly passage will be found in a subsequent letter, by which it appears that her fascinations included simple as well as gentle; I mean her reference to the old gardener, who used to say that "Miss Felicia could 'tice him to do whatever she pleased."

When Miss Browne was little more than five years of age, domestic embarrassments, arising from the failure of the mercantile concern in which her father was engaged, led him to remove his family from Liverpool to North Wales. The house in which she passed the greatest part of her childhood, was precisely such an one as from its situation and character would encourage the developement of her poetic fancies. Grwych* (now partially ruined) is not far from Abergele in Denbigshire; a solitary, old, and spacious mansion; lying close to the sea shore, and in front shut in by a chain of rocky hills. During Mrs. Hemans' last illness, she reverted again and again to this home of her youth, with that peculiar and minute yearning towards "the days of other years," which so affectingly marks the parting hours of even the stern and the sensual. She would dwell upon the tales of her childhood; would tell of the strange creeping awe, with which the solitude and stillness of Grwych inspired her: how it bore the reputation of being a haunted house; and how, on one occasion, having heard a rumour of a fiery greyhound, which kept watch at the end of the avenue; she sallied forth by moonlight, eager, herself, to encounter the goblin. She loved to contrast the fancies born within and around its precincts, with the realities of her after lot; she would say that, though she was never ambitious, could she then have foreseen the fame to which she was destined to rise, the anticipation would have excited a thrill of pleasure, such as the possession had never awakened. She was early a reader of Shakspeare; and, by way of securing shade and freedom from interruption, used to climb an apple tree, and there study his plays; nor had she long made familiar friendship with his "beings of the mind," before she was possessed with the temporary desire, so often born of an intense delight and appreciation, of personifying them. It is remarkable that her fancy led her to prefer the characters of Imogen and Beatrice; nor were her favourites without strong points of resemblance to herself; the one in its airy sentiment tempered with sweet and faithful affection, the other in its brilliant wit redeemed by highmindedness, from sarcasm or vulgarity; so early were her tastes and personal feelings and mental gifts identified! The sea-shore was her forest of Ardennes: and she loved its loneliness and freedom well: it was a favourite freak of hers, when quite a child, to get up privately, after careful attendants had fancied her safe in

*Pronounced Griech.

bed, and making her way down to the water-side, to indulge herself with a stolen bath. The sound of the ocean, and the melancholy sights of wreck and ruin, which follow a storm, made an indelible impression upon her mind, and gave their colouring and imagery—

"A sound and a gleam of the moaning sea"

to many of the lyrics, which were written when she began to trust to her own impulses, and to draw upon her own stores, instead of more timidly retiring under the shadow of mighty names.

Those who are born poets, will find food for the desire within them, under the most ungenial circumstances, and in the midst of the harshest trials; just as the real lover of flowers will contrive not to be without a leaf or a bud, wherewith to cheer his eye, thoug his home be the most airless court in the heart of a vast city. To some, persecution and difficulty are salutary, and their energy must be aroused by resistance. Mrs. Hemans was not one of these. I have often thought that there could be few lots more favourable to the developement of the imagination and sentiment, more calculated to excite a thirst for knowledge, than hers; her own peculiar disposition being taken into the account. Enough was granted to encourage,—enough withheld to quicken aspiration. The unkindness of fortune left her something to wish for; and to one organized like herself, must have given an ideal beauty and importance to a thousand objects which, when received as matters of course, lose their charm and authority. And while, on the one hand, the refinements of life were enhanced in value by restricted circumstances, her mind, on the other—unvitiated by any experience of the artificial world—was drinking in high thoughts and glorious images from the books (what treasures are these to the young enthusiast!) which found the way to her retreat, and which she loved and adopted of her own accord and not in pursuance of any routine. She was never at school; had she been sent to one, she might probably have run away; and I am told that the only things she was ever regularly taught were French, English grammar, and the rudiments of Latin, communicated to her by a gentleman, who used to deplore "that she was not a man to have borne away the highest honours at college!" Occasionally too, she may have been benefited by a passing glimpse of some gifted person. One hour of such an angel visit does more to unfold

and assist the mind at that time of life, when the spirit is almost tumultuously awake, than days, months of intercourse at a period of soberer age and experience. Words are treasured, looks remembered, chance thoughts take root in the heart, teeming with the principle of life; while the very consciousness of being able to appreciate and value the society of those, who give forth their treasures to the young with a freedom and a warmth, which is checked by suspicion in their intercourse with the more sophisticated, has, in itself, a wonder-working spell, under the influence whereof the enthusiast listens, remembers, combines, creates, and is hurried to that most delicious moment of life, when no difficulties darken the future, and in the fulness of joy and inexperience, he feels within himself "*El anche io son' poeta!*"

But to follow the digression yet a step further; while such are the peculiar advantages and pleasures which attend the youth of genius developing itself in seclusion, that condition is subject to other influences to which it may be well, nay it is a duty for one to advert, who would trace out the poetic character with reference to the high destinies of the art. The same position which is most favourable to the imagination may be unfriendly to the general sympathies. The young recluse, feeling himself apart and alone in the right of his mind, the idol of a small and devoted circle, is too apt to throw himself exclusively upon peculiar veins of thought; too fastidiously to adhere to such objects alone as are dearest to himself, and thus feebly to prize, if not utterly fail in gaining the poet's highest attribute. He looks at the world from a distance, and can only fix his eyes upon those who tower above the common crowd: if he tolerates its murmur, it is for the sake of some fragmentary tones of music which mingle therewith. The rest of its inhabitants are to him "the common herd," the other sounds, a Babel of folly and discord, from which he loves to hide himself in the pleasure gardens of his own fancy. And he turns away with a generous, but short-sighted scorn from the small pleasures and small cares of common life; forgetting that inasmuch as the use of monastic religion and monastic learning has passed away with the feudal days of nobles and villains, it is not only wise for his own spirit, but incumbent upon him as the steward of a noble heritage, to do something besides toiling in this retired fairyland of his own; that he is bound to labour in the wider, though less congenial fields of human life and affection, which are peopled with the homely as well as the elegant, the weak as well as the strong.

A man cannot far advance on his pilgrimage without his views becoming widened by that actual collision with life which a woman can rarely experience: yet how many a one is there, who, on the plea of the loneliness of genius, has never known the strength and joy of his own spirit and has passed away like the vapour of the morning! But for one of the gentler sex, shielded as she is by her position in society—engrossed by affections which colour every object coming within their circle; there is always too great a danger of being too exclusive in her devotions; without to these conditions being added, that of retirement from the world to confirm her in hero-worship solely offered to the great and gifted, to encourage her undue shrinking from all that jars upon her highly wrought and sensitive feelings.

It would be difficult, were the whole range of our imaginative literature searched through, to discover a more perfect illustration of the above remarks than is to be found in the works of Mrs. Hemans, and in the progress of mind they register. That she did only a partial justice to her powers, must be admitted by all who ever held friendly intercourse with her; they will feel, too, that she was summoned away at the moment when she might, and must have risen higher than she had ever done before. Her first works are purely classical or purely romantic; their poems may be compared to antique groups of sculpture, or the mailed ornamental figures of the middle ages set in motion. As she advanced on her way, sadly learning the while the grave lessons which time and trial teach, her songs breathed more reality and less of romance; the too exclusive and feverish reverence for high intellectual or imaginative endowment, yielded to a calmness, and a cheerfulness, and a willingness more and more, not merely to speculate upon, but to partake of the "beauty in our daily paths." Had she lived to bring these yet more fully to bear upon the stores of knowledge she had heaped up, she would have produced a work as far superior to any she has left us, as her own latest lyries and scenes exceed the prize poems of her girlhood:—the first frigid exercises of a timid and trammeled writer.

Miss Browne had not long emerged from infancy, when the circumstance of a near and dear member of her family being engaged in the Peninsular campaign, wakened some of her strongest individual feelings; her attention being drawn (as was often the case) through the medium of her affections, to the literature and the scenery and the chivalry of Spain, with which her fancy delighted to associate the career and

the achievements of those she loved. While she shrunk with more than ordinary feminine timidity from any bodily pain,—refusing even to submit to the trifling suffering of having her ears prepared to admit ear-rings—her mind wrought incessantly upon scenes of heroic enterprise and glory; her cherished images of contemplation were the camp, the hold, the skirmish, and the English flag triumphant over all. One of her favourite ornaments at a later period of life was the cross of the Legion of honour, taken on some Spanish battle-field. Among her best loved poems were Campbell's glorious odes, and she could never preeat these two lines,

> Now joy, old England! raise
> In the triumph of thy might!

without the blood rising into her cheek, and her eye kindling. Yet this engrossing delight in military glory was far different from the common school-girl's love of a red coat; in nothing can I trace that common-place frivolity of temperament upon which the noise of drums beaten, and the flare of streaming colours, act as a stimulus.*

She had little taste for mere pageantry. When she visit-

* It is beautiful to remark in many of Mrs. Hemans' poems, the mingling of all that is true, and gentle, and deep in feeling, with all that is most glowing in imagery. Though her muse,—to borrow the expression as striking as true, of one, himself a thorough master of the magnificent,—"*sweeps through even the most flowery paths*," she wears under all her robes of triumph, the pitying heart of a woman. Thus, how entire is the contrast between these two stanzas of "The Illuminated City"—

> I passed through the streets; there were throngs on throngs—
> Like sounds of the deep were their mingled songs;
> There was music forth from each palace borne—
> A peal of the symbal, the harp, and horn;
>
> The forest heard it, the mountains rang,
> The hamlets woke to its haughty clang:
> Rich and victorious was every tone,
> Telling the land of her foe's overthrown.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Didst thou meet not a mourner for all the slain?
> Thousands lie dead on their battle plain!
> Gallant and true were the hearts that fell,
> Grief in the homes they have left must dwell;
> Grief on the aspect of childhood spread,
> And bowing the beauty of woman's head:
> Didst thou hear, midst the songs, not one tender moan,
> For the many brave to their slumbers gone?

ed London as a child, she did not enjoy its crowds and gaiety. In a fragment of a very early letter which is before me, she describes herself as "satiated with opera, park, and play, and longing to get away much more than she ever did to come." This it is true, *may* not have been wholly natural; for there are many, who, full of youthful enthusiasm, and scrupulously delicate in conscience, are ashamed of seeming to take undue pleasure in any thing artificial; but the supposition is, perhaps, unjust. In after life she often described the delight with which the great works of art (particularly of sculpture) impressed her. When first led into a gallery of statues, she exclaimed to those who accompanied her, 'O hush! dont speak!" These two ruling inspirations of chivalry and art, all but exclusively divided her attention in her earliest works. A poem called "England and Spain," was translated into Spanish; of another of which I can find no trace in print, she speaks in the following letter, which contains the germ of the thoughts, habits, and impulses of many a future year.

"December 19th, 1808.

"The severe indisposition from which I have just recovered, has prevented me, my dear aunt, from fulfilling, so early as I could have wished, my promise of writing to you: I have suffered much pain, and should have continued an invalid much longer, but for the unremitting care and attention of my dear mother: my illness was a fever entirely occasioned by cold. I can now appreciate the full value of health, and feel my heart glow with gratitude to the good Supreme, who bestows upon me so inestimable a blessing; so true it is, in the words of Shakspeare, 'that what we have we prize not to the worth, *while we possess it.*' I am now quite restored, and my mind has recovered its usual energies. I never felt a more ardent emulation in the pursuit of excellence than at present. Knowledge, virtue, and religion, are the exalted objects of my enthusiastic wishes and fervent prayers, in which I know you will unite with me. . . .

"You have, I know, perused the papers (as I have done, with *anxiety*, though, perhaps, without the *tremors* which I continually experience. The noble Spaniards! surely, surely, they will be crowned with success: I have never given up the cause notwithstanding the late disastrous intelligence; but I think their prospects begin to wear a brighter appearance, and we may hope that the star of freedom, though long obscured by clouds, will again shine with transcendent ra-

diance. You will smile, my dear aunt, but you know not what an *enthusiast* I am in the cause of Castile and liberty: my whole heart and soul are interested for the gallant patriots, and though females are forbidden to interfere in politics, yet as I have a dear, dear brother, at present on the scene of action, I may be allowed to feel some ardour on the occasion. . . . . "You see I am writing on the anniversary of George's birthday; and I know you will pray that every year may see his progress in virtue and true heroism. I am proud that he is at present in the theatre of glory; and I hope that he will have an opportunity of signalizing his courage, and of proving an honour to his family and an ornament to his profession. I am at this very moment wishing that I possessed a small portion of that patience with which my mother is so eminently gifted, for the paper is not yet arrived, and you may imagine the petulance of your *'little obstreperous niece.'* I have been reading a most delightful French romance, by Madame de Genlis, 'Le Siege de la Rochelle;' you would be in raptures with it. . . . . I think it excels 'Corinne,' which is certainly bestowing a very high eulogium upon any work. Lady Kirkwall paid us a long and highly agreeable visit a few days ago, and brought me these volumes which I have perused with such enthusiasm: she bestowed great commendation upon 'Valour and Patriotism,' and I hope it will justify her encomiums. I had a letter from Major Cox, dated 16th of November, and from Madrid: he wrote in good spirits, and looked forward to the ultimate success of the Spanish cause, Glorious, glorious Castilians! may victory crown your noble efforts. Excuse me for dwelling so much on this subject; for Spain is the subject of my thoughts and words—'my dream by night, my vision by day.' Can you be surprised at my enthusiasm? My head is half turned, but still steady enough to assure you that I remain, ever my dear aunt,

"Your attached and affectionate

"FELICIA."

I cannot but point to the above letter as a remarkable instance of the growth and refinement of taste which must, as life advances, take place even in the most exquisitely gifted. No one would have smiled more certainly than its writer, had she heard, in later years, "Le Siege de la Rochelle" placed higher than "Corinne." Some of her preferences, however, continued unchanged throughout her life. Frois-

sart, a favourite book of her early days, was never deposed in her esteem by any other chronicler of the chivalrous ages; and in one of her latest sonnets, she has left us a record of the delight she found in that most simple and sweet of all French romances, Paul and Virginia.

O gentle story of the Indian isle,
I loved thee in my lonely childhood well.
On the sea-shore, when day's last purple smile
Slept on the waters, and their hollow swell
And dying cadence lent a deeper spell
Unto thine ocean pictures * * *

Something should now be said of Miss Browne's earliest poems. It would be unfair to test the sincerity and strength of the early strivings of a mind, such as is shown in the foregoing fragments and anecdotes, by the excellence of its first fruits. The consciousness of being possessed of the poet's gift—(were it even possible in its utterance to dispense with the cultivation of study and meditation)—is at first so bewildering as to hinder genius from aught save a dim and feeble development: and it is more by watching the tenor of their lives, by observing the tendency of their tastes and antipathies, than by anatomizing productions purely imitative, that the genuine poet is to be singled out from the herd of "clever children." Thus, in the two volumes published by Miss Browne,—the first bearing the date of 1808, and containing some verses written by her when only nine years of age,—the second, entitled "The Domestic Affections," published in the year 1812,—there is, as might be expected, no individuality discernible, save, perhaps, in the choice of subject, and a singular harmony and finish of numbers: on the other hand, we find in them none of those starts and conceits and extravagances, upon the mistaken strength whereof—a real weakness—not a few audacious young spirits have claimed to be numbered among "the starry ones," —a claim never to be confirmed by the efforts of their riper years. Many of the verses in the first-mentioned volume, which is inscribed to lady Kirkwall, contain those little birthday compliments, addresses to attached relations, and expressions of affection, or regret, in which the young delight to exercise their newly discovered power. A single specimen will suffice, from the poems of a more purely fanciful character.

FAIRY SONG.

All my life is joy and pleasure,
Sportive as my tuneful measure;
In the rose's cup I dwell,
Balmy sweets perfume my cell;
My food the crimson, luscious cherry,
And the vine's luxurious berry;
The nectar of the dew is mine,
Nectar from the flowers divine.
And when I join the fairy band,
Lightly tripping hand in hand,
By the moonlight's quivering beam,
In concert with the dashing stream;
Then my music leads the dance,
When the gentle fays advance;
And oft thy numbers on the green
Lull to rest the fairy queen.
All my life is joy and pleasure,
Sportive as my airy measure.

This collection of her earliest poems was almost the only one of her works for the sake of which Mrs. Hemans had to taste the gall as well as the honey of criticism. An unkind review to which they gave occasion, so affected her, as to confine her to her bed for several days. It is possible, however, that its severity, by suggesting to her the necessity of study, and meditation, and unflagging devotion, may have been salutary; for some progress is achieved in the second and smaller volume to which I have referred. Warlike themes diversify the gentler ones to love and duty:—"The Bards to the Soldiers of Caractacus;" "The Angel of the Sun," "The Dying Gladiator," and other poems of equally high-sounding title, stand side by side with "The Ruin and its Flowers," "The Mountaineer's Song," and "The Domestic Affections." The imagery of these poems, though in no respect newer than in those of an earlier date, is collected from sources more widely distant: their colouring, too, indicates an increased strength of hand—their versification is cast into a greater variety of metre. But here, too, it would be inexpedient to linger, and wearisome to offer any very extensive extract. Perhaps the best sustained of these poems is the one entitled "War and Peace," written in the stately heroic measure, and containing allusion and simile and apostrophe according to the most approved forms. But some of the minor pieces are less like a formal exercise, and more closely prophetic of the style in which the poetess was

on a future day so signally to excel; and the following verses rise above the average merit of the fugitive poetry of the day.

THE RUIN AND ITS FLOWERS.

Sweets of the wild, that breathe and bloom
  On this lone tower, this ivy'd wall;
Lend to the gale a rich perfume,
  And grace the ruin in its fall;
Though doomed, remote from careless eye,
To smile, to flourish, and to die,
  In solitude sublime,
Oh! *ever* may the spring renew
Your balmy scent and glowing hue,
  To deck the robe of Time!

Breathe fragrance! breathe, enrich the air,
  Though wasted on its wings unknown!
Blow flowrets! blow, though vainly fair,
  Neglected and alone!
These towers that long withstood the blast,
These mossy towers are mouldering fast,
  While Flora's children stay;
To mantle o'er the lonely pile,
To gild destruction with a smile,
  And beautify decay!

* * * *

Lorn echo of these mouldering walls,
To thee no festal measure calls;
No music through the desert-halls
  Awakes thee to rejoice!
How still thy sleep, as death profound,
As, if within this lonely round,
A step, a note, *a whisper'd sound*,
  Had ne'er aroused thy voice!

Thou hear'st the zephyr, murmuring, dying;
Thou hear'st the foliage, waving, sighing;
But ne'er again shall harp, or song,
These dark, deserted courts along,
  Disturb thy calm repose;
The harp is broke, the song is fled,
The voice is hush'd, the bard is dead!
And never shall thy tones repeat
Or lofty strain or carol sweet,
  With plaintive close.

* * * *

The foregoing stanzas have been purposely selected at random. I am not aware of much poetry produced at so

early an age as their writer's, at the side of which they may not worthily stand. When their author again appeared before the public, her mind had received much and various cultivation; she had then, too, taken, though so young, that most important step in life, which introduced her to the cares, and anxieties, and affections of maternity.

CHAPTER II.

Miss Browne's marriage—Her retirement from the world—Her translations—Her Prize Poems—Her humorous Poetry—"The Mineralogist"—The "Tales and Historic Scenes"—The "Sceptic"—"Modern Greece"—Intercourse with Bishop Heber—His remarks on a Poem in Progress—Notices of the "Vespers of Palermo," with Letters to the Rev. H. H. Milman—The "Welsh Melodies."

In the year 1812, Miss Browne was married to Captain Hemans of the Fourth Regiment. This union may be said to have closed, shortly before the birth of a fifth son, by a protracted separation. "Unfortunately," to use the words of a very slight biographical sketch prefixed to the volume of Poetical Remains recently published, "Captain Hemans' health had been undermined by the vicissitudes of a military life;—more particularly by the hardships he had endured in

the disastrous retreat upon Corunna, and by the fever which proved fatal to many of our troops in the Walcheren expedition. Indeed, to such an extent was this breaking up, as to render it necessary for him, a few years after his marriage, to exchange his native climate for the milder sky of Italy." Mrs. Hemans, whose literary pursuits rendered it advisable for her not to leave England, remained with her family, now removed to Bronwylfa, a pleasant residence in the neighbourhood of St. Asaph.

The memorials permitted to me of this part of Mrs. Hemans' life, though less copious and minute than those which illustrate the period of personal intercourse, are interesting, as consistently illustrating the mind whereof the master impulses and gifts had been indicated in her childish readings of Shakspeare in the apple-tree, her feverish delight in military glory, and the quick and wayward temperament which made her enjoy the stolen summer evening's bath. The bud, the blossom, and the fruit, underwent no modifications of form and colour, save those of a natural and progressive expansion. That this developement was rapid, may be ascribed to the peculiar circumstances of Mrs. Hemans' position, which, by placing her in a household, as a member and not as its head, excused her from many of those small cares of domestic life, which might have either fretted away her day-dreams, and, by interruption, have made of less avail the search for knowledge to which she bent herself with such eagerness; or, more probably still, might have imparted to her poetry more of masculine health and stamen, at the expense of some of its romance and music. But—in pointing out the influences which gave to her writings their manner, by some thoughtlessly mistaken for monotony—it is a duty also to remark, that Mrs. Hemans' poems, though often deeply melancholy, and dwelling, it may be, a little too exclusively upon the farewells and regrets of life—upon the finer natures broken in pieces by contact with a mercenary and scornful world,—are never morbid in their tone—never convey a word or thought of questionable morality. It has been truly said, by a contemporary writer of her own sex,* that "she never degraded the poet's art: if she even did not as well as under more fortunate circumstances she might have done, she never published any thing that might not be

*In a private letter written upon receiving the news of Mrs. Hemans' death.

said to make a necessary part of her poetic reputation:—like a noble building of finely-wrought free-stone, though one stone closely resembles another, all go together to make a magnificent and solid whole. Her sympathies were with our human nature, as exhibited under suffering, or through the affections. I do not remember a single poem in which the incidents were of vice, even to work a moral through them;—it was the highest virtue, the most tried and enduring affection, and the yearning of our spiritual nature after a higher and purer communion and existence, that inspired her. Such a series of poems as hers may, to a certain degree, be monotonous; but the soul that dictated them is wonderfully noble, and must be likewise pure."

The desire for knowledge manifested by Mrs. Hemans, from her earliest age, has been already adverted to. She still continued increasingly to enrich her mind with treasure, gathered from the old classic authors, and the more modern writers of Italy and the Peninsula. Of her familiarity with the German language more will be said in its proper place. "The nature and manner of her studies," says her sister, in a letter which has materially aided me in the verification of several dates and incidents, "had at all times, to a common observer, somewhat of a desultory appearance; for she seemed to take in every thing, as it were, by intuition, and whilst flying from one subject to another, in what might have been thought the most puzzling way possible, each retained in her mind its distinct 'form and pressure,' and there was no fear of its ever being confused or effaced. I do not think I ever saw her with only one book within reach; she was always surrounded by five or six, on every diversity of topic." Her versions from Horace and Camoens, an ode or two translated from Herrera, and some fragments from the Italian poets, remain to attest her familiarity with the several languages in question. Those who are interested in comparative criticism may find amusement in contrasting Mrs. Hemans' versions from Horace, with Miss Seward's Paraphrases, in which the elder poetess complacently labours to give as much Darwinian embroidery as possible to the thoughts of the graceful Roman, and smiles upon her work, when complete, with the air of one who has accomplished notable improvements. Mrs. Hemans' success in translation, though sufficient to prove her familiarity, not only with the peculiar productions of the writer she undertook to render, but also with the general spirit of his language and time,—is not remark-

able. It was during this period, too, that she contributed a series of papers on Foreign Literature to the Edinburgh Magazine; these, with some very few exceptions, being the only prose compositions ever produced by her.

Her two prize poems, "Wallace," and "Dartmoor," the latter of which received its honour at the hands of the Royal Society of Literature in the year 1821, may be also referred to this time of transition; and with them, "The Restoration of the works of Art to Italy." Though all these poems were more or less successful, an enumeration of them is sufficient; for they must be considered as the exercises, rather than the effusions of a mind, as distrustful of its own power, as it was filled almost to overflowing. Occasionally, too, she gave way in her verse, to her livelier humour—the same which in a freak had absolutely made her set one side of a furze-covered Welsh hill on fire, when abroad on a party of pleasure. None, however, of her "wilderness" (to borrow her own name for certain whimsical national tunes in which she took great delight) have been published. Many were destroyed as soon as the effervescence of the moment in which they were produced had subsided. The following, however, written in 1816, will be read with interest, as the sole specimen of her early attempts in this style of composition ever given to the public. As she grew older, her fantasies were spoken not versified.

EPITAPH ON MR. ——

A CELEBRATED MINERALOGIST.

Stop, passenger, a wondrous tale to list—
Here lies a famous mineralogist!
Famous, indeed,—such traces of his power
He's left from Penmanbach to Penmanmawr,—
Such caves, and chasms, and fissures in the rocks,
His work resemble those of earthquake shocks;
And future ages very much may wonder
What mighty giant rent the hills asunder;
Or whether Lucifer himself had ne'er
Gone with his crew to play at foot-ball there.

His fossils, flints, and spars, of every hue,
With him, good reader, here lie buried too!
Sweet specimens, which, toiling to obtain,
He split huge cliffs, like so much wood, in twain:
We knew, so great the fuss he made about them,
Alive or dead, he ne'er would rest without them,

So, to secure soft slumber to his bones,
We paved his grave with all his favourite stones.
His much-loved hammer's resting by his side,
Each hand contains a shell-fish petrified;
His mouth a piece of pudding stone incloses,
And at his feet a lump of coal reposes:
Sure he was born beneath some lucky planet,
His very coffin plate is made of granite!
Weep not, good reader! he is truly blest
Amidst chalcedony and quartz to rest—
Weep not for him! but envied be his doom,
Whose tomb, though small, for all he loved had room:
And, O ye rocks! schist, gneiss, whate'er ye be,
Ye varied strata, names too hard for me,
Sing "O be joyfull" for your direst foe,
By death's fell hammer is at length laid low.
Ne'er on your spoils again shall ——— riot,
Shut up your cloudy brows, and rest in quiet!
He sleeps—no longer planning hostile actions,—
As cold as any of his petrifactions;
Enshrined in specimens of every hue,
Too tranquil e'en to dream, ye rocks of you.

The "Tales and Historic Scenes," in which will be found the germ of many of Mrs. Hemans' more perfect and characteristic ballads and lyrics, were published in the year 1819; about the same period appeared "The Sceptic" and "Modern Greece." Though in each of these works something of progressive excellence and originality is to be traced, they are here dwelt upon only for the sake of an anecdote or two. "The Sceptic," it may be remarked is the only poem, of a purely didactic character, ever written by Mrs. Hemans. The young are eager to enforce truth by zealous and direct exhortation; those of a mature age are willing to persuade by illustration. But "The Sceptic," though in impressiveness falling far short of the glorious picture of a true faith and a steadfast mind triumphing over torture and death displayed in "The Forest Sanctuary," was not without its effect and authority; it called forth an anonymous tribute of some merit, probably the first of the many communications, some touching, some ridiculous, which she afterwards received, dooming the latter to instant burial in what she would playfully call her "chaos drawer." During the latter years of her life, too, Mrs. Hemans was visited by a gentleman, who, upon being admitted to her presence, thanked her earnestly for the serious benefit he had derived from "The Sceptic," to the perusal of which he gratefully referred, as having been greatly instrumental in leading him back from the very verge

of infidelity. The poem of "Modern Greece," independently of its intrinsic beauty, possesses interest as having called forth an expression of praise from Lord Byron, which is to be found in one of his letters. Her mind appears about this time to have turned with a fond yearning towards this land of beauty and ruin; and her own lyrics relating to its sorrows and its victories, and to what Bulwer has so happily called its "graceful superstition," may be characterised by the description applied by herself to the epigrams from the minor Greek poets. "They remind me," says she in a letter to a friend—it is a pleasure to name her in association with so accomplished a scholar and so amiable a man as Archdeacon Wrangham: "of the antique vases, with their exquisite tracery of leaves, and flowers, and joyous dancing figures."*

* I cannot resist quoting two verses of one of Mrs. Hemans' latter lyrics, as a most happy illustration of the above remark; they are from the poem "And I too in Arcadia," the first idea of which was suggested by a picture by Poussin, representing a pastoral group gazing upon a tomb bearing that well known inscription.

"There is many a summer sound
That pale sepulchre round;
Through the shade young birds are dancing,
Insect-wings in sun-streaks glancing;
Glimpses of blue festal skies
Pouring in when soft winds rise;
Violets o'er the turf below,
Shedding out their warmest glow;
Yet a spirit not its own,
O'er the greenwood now is thrown,
Something of an under-note
Through its music seems to float,
Something of a stillness gray
Creeps across the laughing day.
Something, dimly from those old words felt,
'I, too, shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt!'

"Was some gentle kindred maid
In the grave with dirges laid?
Some fair creature, with the tone
Of whose voice a joy is gone,
Leaving melody and mirth
Poorer on this altered earth?
Is it thus that so they stand,
Dropping flowers from every hand?
Flowers and lyres, and gathered store,
Of red wild-fruit prized no more?
No! from that bright band of morn,
Not one link hath yet been torn;
'Tis the shadow of the tomb
Falling o'er the summer bloom.
O'er the flush of love and life

It will be seen then, that Mrs. Hemans' name was gradually stealing forth into the world as a word of promise. At an earlier period, indeed, the fame of her beauty and extraordinary talents had travelled far enough to reach Shelley, who, being at that time filled to restlessness with a conviction of the importance of his daring and unpopular philosophy, addressed to her a series of letters, of which I believe there is no trace remaining. But the first literary character of any distinction, with whom she became familiarly acquainted, was Bishop Heber, who at that time passed a part of every year at Bodryddan, near St. Asaph. "She was then, I believe," says the notes to which this portion of my memorials is greatly indebted, "about five-and-twenty years of age, and had already distinguished herself by her 'Restoration' and her two prize poems. A more valuable friend for her than Bishop Heber, could hardly be found." She confided her literary plans to him, and always spoke with affectionate remembrance of his delightful social qualities, and with a deeper feeling of regard for his piety, as fervent as it was free from moroseness or sectarianism. So, also she wrote of him,

* * * *
Hath not thy voice been here amongst us heard?
And that deep soul of gentleness and power,
Have we not felt its breath in every word
Wont from thy lip as Hermon's dew to shower?
Yes! in our hearts thy fervent thoughts have burned,
Of Heaven they were, and thither have returned.
* * * *

I am enabled to give a proof (from his own hand-writing) of the high estimation in which the author of "Palestine" held not merely the natural gifts, but the acquired knowledge of the young poetess and her powers of research. The note which accompanies the following interesting hints is not dated; but, from the formality of its address, must be referred to a very early period of their intercourse. The poem, to which the remarks allude, was one in which Mrs. Hemans meant to display the poetry of superstition, to trace out the symbolical meaning, by which the popular faiths of every

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Passing with a sudden strife;
'Tis the low prophetic breath
Murmuring from the house of death,
Whose faint whisper thus their hearts can melt,
'I, too, shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt.' "
Songs of Summer Hours.

land are linked together, and which tend so impressively to their coincidence. Possibly, however, she may have shrunk from the research and illustration recommended to her, as involving too much labour: at all events, the poem was never completed.

* * * * * * *

"After stanza 7, 'a slow receding star,' something might be introduced, perhaps, about Astræa, or Righteousness, which the heathen poets described as a celestial virgin, who abode on earth till the commencement of the iron age, and then withdrew to the heavens and the constellation of the Balance. Like her, Religion left the world, and was only to be traced in the grand features of nature, which testified to their Maker's existence and power, &c., &c.

"Perhaps you might also introduce some mention of the Tower of Babel, and Nimrod, its supposed founder, whose impious ambition led to the judicial confusion of tongues and dispersion of the human race. This might introduce stanzas 8 and 9.

"After stanza 12, I would certainly introduce the doubt which naturally arose in the mind of the savage, whether the blended prospects of good and evil in nature, might not arise from the struggle of a good and evil principle. Thus they saw poison opposed to nourishment, deformity to beauty, disease to vigour, death to life, evil to good; and were ready to conclude, that there must be two opposing gods, the authors of such opposite phenomena. Hence as loftier or baser feelings prevailed in the mind, men were led either to address their hopes and thankfulness to the fountain of Good, or to turn in fear or in malice, to deprecate the severity or invoke the aid of the fountain of mischief. Hence, in all rude countries the sorcerer divides the respect of mankind with the priest. Hence, the wizards of Egypt who contended with Moses,—the women of Endor possessed with a familiar spirit. Hence in Greece the Furies had their sacred groves, which none might enter and live; into one of which Œpidus entered when an exile, and pursued by his guilty conscience. Hence the Thessalian witches, who smeared themselves with human gore and made philtres of the hearts of famished children; hence the hags whose incantations were supposed by the Romans to have consumed, by instigation of Piso, the youth and life of Germanicus. Hence the witches of the middle ages, who invoked the Arch fiend, and solicited power from him to works of evil. In like manner the Laplanders, even now, sell the wind and the storm. The negroes deal in the horrible myste-

ries of Obi; and the Cambrians have their cursing well; while in the villages of Scotland, the devil has a plot of land set apart to him which is never flowered, sown or grassed, but devoted to cursing and barrenness. So deeply laid in the human heart is that principle which the Magi embodied into a system!

"But while the base and sordid followed after slavish and horrible superstition, those of more lofty feelings and near akin to heaven, looked to heaven and not to hell for light and protection, &c. 'O, marvel not,' &c.

"After stanza 19, mention that the stars were supposed to exert their influences also during the day; to walk the world and report to the Almighty the deeds of the evil and the good. So one of them is introduced by Plautus, as watching over the fortunes of two shipwrecked orphans. The stars were therefore among the earliest objects of worship; with the Arabs in the time of Job, the Chaldeans of Babylon, &c. Zohara, or the planet Venus, believed to have been a woman, so beautiful as to have ensnared the angels Haruth and Maruth. (See Southey's Thalaba.) Hence the flattery of modern times introduced the names of the mighty of the earth among the constellations. The stars also kept an influence on the superstitions of mankind, even long after their altars had ceased to blaze, and men no longer paid them immediately their homage as to divinities. Thus judicial astrology, from Babylon and the Chaldees, penetrated to Rome, and thence through all Europe. Even statesmen who feared no God, such as Louis XI., and the Regent Duc of Orleans, paid regard to such prognostics; and the mind of Newton himself was for a time fascinated by them. Even now, the planet Venus is identified with the Virgin Mary, as 'Star of the Sea,' and receives an undue share of homage from the mariners of Spain, Portugal and Sicily. What wonder, then, that in the ruder ages of which we are speaking, the stars and the host of heaven received the vows of the ignorant shepherd of Chaldea or Nineveh.

'But when thine orb, O sun,' &c.

"After 25, you may perhaps notice the punishment which these bloody and impure rites drew down on their votaries. First, the Canaanites, next the Phœnicians and apostate Israelites, last the Carthaginians, &c. Such were the abuses with which men profaned or rendered more impious the blind idolatry which they paid to the sun,—

'But filled with holier joy the Persian stood,' &c.

"After 28, certainly introduce Belshazzar, and as many more of the prodigies which accompanied or foretold the fall of Babylon, as you may see convenient. Conclude with observing, how God made the growth of the religion of Zoroaster subservient to the security of his people, and describe the return of the Jews to Palestine.

"CANTO II.

"Egypt, and Greece, and Rome: worship of demi-gods —(their supposed miracles at Delphos and elsewhere)—its absurdities gave rise to the yet worse system of Epicurus— Fall of Rome.

"CANTO III.

"Gothic superstitions—Druids—Odin—Thor, &c. Fairies —immortality of the soul more explicitly avowed by the northern nations than by the Greeks and Romans—inferiority of all these religions to the true—review of the present state of the earth—the blindness of Mohamedanism and Paganism overspreading so great a portion of it, &c.

"Anticipation of the complete trial of the gospel.

Bodryddan, May 1.

"Dear Madam,

"I have in the preceding pages thrown together all the hints which occurred to me as likely to be useful to your poem. I shall sincerely rejoice should any of them save you any trouble, or contribute to producing more lines as beautiful as those which I have already read. Your undertaking is certainly an arduous one, but I really think that its opening affords a very favorable augury of your final success.

"Believe me, dear Madam,
"Yours very truly,
"REGINALD HEBER."

It was at Bishop Heber's instigation, that Mrs. Hemans first attempted composition in the dramatic form. He was her adviser in the "Vespers of Palermo"—her next great effort. She began this drama originally without any idea of its being brought forward upon the stage, and would often say, that it would have never been completed, save for the encouraging interest taken in it by her gifted friend. The tragedy,

when at last finished, was entrusted to the care of one, to whose kindness I owe the following letters. The uncertainties of the world behind the scenes, were, in her case, unusually protracted: the playful yet patient manner in which she refers to her suspense, should be a lesson to the "irritable race," especially when aspiring to that most difficult and brilliant of all literary honors—a signal dramatic success.

"Bronwylfa, June 19, 1821,

"TO THE REV. H. H. MILMAN.

"Sir,

"I have many acknowledgments to offer, for the very kind interest you take in the success of my dramatic attempt, and also for the approbation with which you have honored it, and the value of which, I trust, I can fully appreciate. The obligation is considerably enhanced, by your having taken upon yourself the task of curtailment, a kindness which I was only prevented requesting from you, by my fear of trespassing too unreasonably upon your time and attention. I was aware of the happy talent possessed by the managers, for striking out all those parts of the play, which might at all tend to disturb the comfortable tranquillity of the audience: and I know in how distinguished a manner they had displayed this their usual characteristic, in the instance of 'Fazio:' it is, therefore, a great satisfaction to me that the 'Sicilian Vespers' should be in the hands of one, upon whose judgment I can rely with entire confidence. In the advisability of the curtailments you recommend, I entirely acquiesce, and I should think that the opening scene between Procida and the peasants might also be abridged with advantage. I have only one objection to make to the omission of the scene between Raimond and Constance in the third act,—I cannot help fancying that if it were entirely left out, Raimond would seem rather less occupied in providing for the safety of his 'ladye love' than would be strictly chivalrous, and his interference in her behalf at the close of the act would appear almost a casual occurrence. I think I should prefer shortening that scene considerably, and making such alterations as would remove that appearance of betrayal which you have remarked, and indeed, not without reason. If, however, you are still of opinion that it should be altogether omitted, be assured that I shall feel perfectly satisfied with the decision. I am fully aware that the piece, in its present state, is considerably too long for the

stage; for which, indeed, I should never have ventured to offer it, but for the advice of Mr. R. Heber, who kindly favored me with his opinion on the subject. With regard to the objection of my having transplanted Etna to the neighborhood of Palermo, in defiance of all geographical authorities, I must frankly confess, that the idea of adhering to the unity of place never once entered into my thoughts. I really always looked upon the English drama as a 'chartered libertine,' which utterly disclaimed all such regulations, and thought that when I had once established myself upon the island, I was as much entitled to the unlimited range of its domains, 'from the centre all round to the sea,' as Robinson Crusoe to the possession of his undisputed territories. I shall strictly adhere to your advice of concealing my name, and trust that it will not yet be too late to secure the silence of the friends to whom I mentioned the subject, when consulting them as to the best means of introducing the play to the managers. Should the secret transpire, notwithstanding my precautions, I trust the blame will not be laid upon feminine communicativeness. I think Sir Walter Scott's recommending publicity is something like the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst declaiming in praise of abstinence and on the virtues of St. Dunstan's well. I fear the language of the piece is full of inaccuracies, from the great haste in which it was transcribed. I recollect that in the opening speech of the third act, the word 'summon' is repeated twice in the space of about three lines; in the last instance, it should have been 'rally.'"

TO THE SAME.

"Bronwylfa, October 12th, 1821.

. . . "A late domestic affliction has prevented my paying, as yet, much attention to the alterations which I intended to make. As I cannot help looking forward to the day of trial with much more of dread than of sanguine expectation, I must willingly acquiesce in your recommendations of delay, and shall rejoice in having the respite as much prolonged as possible. I begin almost to shudder at my own presumption, and if it were not for the kind encouragement I have received from you and Mr. Reginald Heber, should be much more anxiously occupied in searching for any outlet of escape, than in attempting to overcome the difficulties which seem to obstruct my onward path.

"With regard to the translation from the French Sicilian

Vespers, as I have determined upon changing the name of mine, (which is to be simply 'Procida,') I trust they will not materially interfere with each other. It would be a source of serious regret to me, should mine be ultimately performed without Mr. Charles Kemble. . . . . as you have inspired me with a most devout horror of the whole race of managers. I begin to look at them very much in the light of so many Ogres, and to feel that it will be almost sufficient cause for self-gratulation, if I put my head into the wolf's jaws and escape unhurt. My own experience in transactions of this nature, is just what might be expected from one, whose life has hitherto been passed among the Welsh mountains. It is, indeed, my only apology for the trouble to which I have been the cause of subjecting you." * * *

TO THE SAME.

"Bronwylfa, Dec. 5th, 1821.

"My dear Sir,

"I beg to offer you my sincere congratulations on your recent and most gratifying success, of which few have heard with more lively satisfaction than myself. Your recollection of my interests at such a time demands my warmest thanks. I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter from Oxford, and was much gratified by the intelligence it contains respecting my play, as I had always intended, and hoped, that Mr. C. Kemble would take the part of Raimond di Procida. * * * It was very much my wish in changing the name of the piece, to have called it '*The Procidi*,' but it was suggested to me that such a title would be far too Italian for an English audience, and, indeed, the various corruptions of the name *Fazio*, would make me hesitate on such a point. If, however, you should be of a different opinion, will you have the kindness to alter it into the above? it can make no great difference, as even with the name as it now stands, I think I may be tolerably certain of its being turned into *Prosody* in a short time. . . . . As for Vittoria, I dare say I shall have her transformed into a perfect Drawcansir. It will give me great pleasure if you think the piece improved by the various alterations I have made. I am, however, much too sensible of its many defects, not to feel extremely *tremulous* at the idea of its approaching trial. Whatever may be the result, allow me to assure you how much I shall ever feel in-

debted to your kindness on this occasion, and with what grateful esteem I am, dear sir,

"Your truly obliged,
"F. HEMANS."

Another fragment from the same series of letters, though not strictly relating to the drama in question, may here be introduced.

"March 7th, 1822.

* * "I cannot conclude, without expressing, however inadequately, the delight with which I have just risen from the perusal of the 'Martyr of Antioch.' It has added another noble proof to those you have already given the world, of the power and dignity which genius derives from its consecration to high and sacred purposes. Never were the 'gay religions, full of pomp and gold,' so beautifully contrasted with the deep and internal sublimity of Christianity. I could dwell upon many parts which have made a lasting impression upon my mind, did I not fear that it would appear almost presumptuous to offer a tribute of praise so insignificant as mine, to that which must have already received the suffrage of all who are entitled to judge of excellence." * * * *

"Bronwylfa, March 26th, 1823.

"My dear Sir,

"I feel particularly sensible for the considerate kindness which dictated your last letter to me. I had been somewhat suprised, but not in the least uneasy on seeing Miss Mitford's play announced, as I felt satisfied that had any thing occurred to prevent the ultimate representation of mine, I might depend on you giving me information. With regard to the point of precedence, it is one to which I am wholly indifferent; my only anxiety is to be relieved from the long suspense which circumstances have unavoidably occasioned."

At last, after all these changes, and caballings, and uncertainties, "The Vespers of Palermo" was brought forward at Covent Garden in the month of December, 1823: the principal characters being taken by Mr. Young, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. Yates, Mrs. Bartley, and Miss F. H. Kelly. Much might be said of the causes which prevented this play from realising, when represented, the high hopes which had been entertained of its success by those who had seen it in manuscript, were this the place for discussing green-room matters, or for entering

into a critical anatomy of its structure, and the manner in which the authoress worked out her original conception. To myself, I confess, that especially as it approaches its close, the "Vespers of Palermo" appears rather a collection of separate high-toned and striking scenes, than a display of conflicting passions inevitably developing themselves in such a series of events, as *must* by their sequence and coherence work up the interest of the audience to the true tragic point. It is interesting to see how Mrs. Hemans bore the destruction of her long cherished hopes. The following letter was written immediately upon her receiving the news of the tragedy being withdrawn.

TO THE REV. H. H. MILMAN.

Bronwylfa, December 16, 1823.

"My dear sir,

"It is difficult to part with the hopes of three years without some painful feelings, but your kind letter has been of more service to me than I can attempt to describe; I will not say that it revives my hopes of success, because I think it better that I should 'file my mind,' to prevent those hopes from gaining any ascendancy: but it sets in so clear a light the causes of failure, that my disappointment has been greatly softened by its perusal. The many friends from whom I have heard on this occasion, express but one opinion. As to Miss Kelly's acting, and its fatal effect on the fortunes of the piece, I cannot help thinking that it will be impossible to counteract the unfavourable impression which this must have produced; and I almost wish, as far as relates to my own private feelings, that the attempt may not be made. I shall not, however, interfere in any way on the subject. I have not heard from Mr. Kemble, but I have written both to him and to Mr. Young, to express my grateful sense of their splendid exertions in support of the piece. As a female, I cannot help feeling rather depressed by the extreme severity with which I have been treated in the morning papers; I know not why this should be, for I am sure I should not have attached the slightest value to their praise, but I suppose it is only a proper chastisement for my temerity; for a female who shrinks from such things, has certainly no business to write tragedies.

"For your support and assistance, as well as that of my other friends, I cannot be too grateful, nor can I ever consider any transaction of my life unfortunate, which has given me

the privilege of calling you a friend, and afforded me the recollection of so much long tried kindness. Ever believe me, my dear sir, most faithfully,

"Your obliged friend,

"F. HEMANS."

"The Vespers of Palermo" was afterwards produced in Edinburgh with much greater success than had attended it in the metropolis. Sir Walter Scott wrote the epilogue, and I believe the letters of courtesy, which passed between Mrs. Hemans and himself on the subject, gave rise to their subsequent acquaintance. "I hear," says he, writing of the play, in his usual manly and unaffected style, "from every quarter most favourable accounts of its success, in which my countryfolks have done more credit to themselves than you. I am really ashamed of your acknowledgements, having done so little to deserve them. I sent Mrs. Siddons an epilogue stuffed with parish jokes and bad puns, which her excellent speaking made pass current as the work of a better hand."

Mrs. Hemans never spoke of her tragedy without gratefully recurring to the kindness and sympathy shown her during its progress, and upon its failure. She would say, too, that she rejoiced in being prevented by the latter from further turning her attention to composition for the stage. As she advanced in life, her taste for the acted drama gradually decreased; she thought that the decline of its popularity must of necessity keep pace with an increase of the refinement and cultivation of thought. But she never lost her reverence for, or delight in, our own noble old dramatic writers, or those of Italy, Spain, and Germany; and she would speak with enthusiasm of the many admirable plays produced since the century came in—how gloriously different in their passion and poetry—how strangely different in their success—from the efforts of the playwrights in those more palmy days of the stage, when the maidservant, to excuse herself for weeping at Miss More's "Percy" pleaded, "Well, ma'am, and a great many ladies of quality did so too." Almost her greatest favorite among modern dramas was Miss Baillie's "Ethwald:" perhaps she liked this all the more for the association connected with it, of her having first read it among the ruins of Conway Castle. Coleridge's "Remorse," was another she would often mention, and she could never speak enough of his version of "Wallenstein,"—no translation, but a transfusion from one

language to another, of one of the noblest works of modern times. A part of her indifference to the acted drama, may be ascribed to the seclusion of her residence, which prevented her from seeing the principal artists of the day. She never, I believe, witnessed the performance of any great tragedian save Kean. To his splendid *meteoric* talent she did full justice; she said that "seeing him act was like reading Shakspeare by flashes of lightning." "My dear Madam," replied one in whose hearing she gave utterance to this phantasy, 'but how could a flash of lightning last long enough to read a play of Shakspeare's by?"

The Welsh Melodies which first introduced Mrs. Hemans to the public as a song writer, had already made their appearance, as will be seen by the letters which follow. Some of them are remarkable for the melody of their numbers, in particular the song to the well known air, "Ar hyd y nos." Her fine feeling for music, in which, as also in drawing, she would have signally excelled could she have bestowed the time and patient labor requisite for obtaining mastery over the mechanical difficulties of these arts, assisted her not only in her choice of measures, but also of her words; and, although, in speaking of her songs, it must be remarked that some of the latter ones are almost too full of meaning to require the further clothing of sweet sound, instead of their being left, as an outline, waiting for the musician's coloring hand, they must be all praised as flowing and expressive; and it is needless to remind the reader how many of them, united with her sister's music, have obtained the utmost popularity. She had well studied the national character of the Welsh airs, and the allusions to the legendary history of the ancient Britons, which her songs contain, are happily chosen. But it was an instinct with Mrs. Hemans to catch the picturesque points of national character, as well as of national music; in the latter she always delighted. A fragment of a letter is before me, written shortly after she had heard the Tyrolese minstrels. "What a spirit of the Alps breathes through all their wild mountain music; but it should be heard out amid rocks and torrents. It is like transplanting a forest pine into a parterre, to bring it into a room crowded with all the beauty and fashion of the vicinity."*

* It was on this occasion that some one, (I believe Mrs. Hemans herself) asked Maria Rainer the common question, whether she pined much for her own country; her answer was, "*Ich habe ein Kind dort*"—"I have a child there."

CHAPTER III.

Correspondence—Queen of Prussia—Welsh Scenery—Welsh Melodies—Bardic System—Tieck—Miss Baillie's plays—Their female characters—Iturbide—Change of residence—Poland—"The Siege of Valencia," &c.—"The voice of Spring"—"The Hebrew mother"—"Korner and his Sister"—Letters to Mr. G. F. Richardson—"The Forest Sanctuary"—"The Records of Women"—Mrs. Hemans' eagerness in composition—Rhyllon—Her favorite dingle—Her American reputation and friendships—Anecdotes.

THE following series of letters (kindly forwarded to me while these "Memorials" were going through the press,) illustrates the years embraced in the last chapter. It will be seen that the lady to whom they are addressed was a judicious and kind literary confidante. There is little to be added to the notices which they contain of Mrs. Hemans' studies, and wishes, and habits during the time above mentioned,—one of the happiest periods of her life. The progress and development of the peculiar powers and fancies of her mind, may be as distinctly traced in her correspondence as in the works to which her letters refer.

Bronwylfa, Nov. 15, 1822.

"My dear Miss ——,

"Accept my sincere thanks for the very kind letter with which you have favored me: allow me at the same time to assure you that any attention it might have been in our power to have offered you and Mr. ——, would have been inadequate to express the warm interest you have excited in our minds. Believe me, the few hours we passed in your society, though so heavily clouded by recent affliction, will be long remembered both by my sister and myself; and, to use an expression of our old Welsh bards, we shall look back to them as to "*green spots on the floods*," for our paths, in this retired part of the world, are seldom crossed by those who leave any deeper impression upon our memory than 'the little lines of yesterday.' . . . . .

"I believe I mentioned to you the extraordinary letters with which I was once persecuted by ———; he, with whom 'Queen Mab hath been.' It was rather a singular circumstance that the parcel in which Mr. ——'s work was forwarded to me, contained, at the same time, an elegy on the death of that deluded character, sent from I know not what quarter: it was in a separate sealed packet, addressed to me, to the care of Mr. Murray, and whether meant as what the French call '*hommage de l'auteur*,' or sent from any other person, I dare say I shall never find out. . . . . .

"We are very happy that you find the Memoir of the Queen of Prussia so interesting. I met with a little German piece of poetry a few days since on the subject of her death, which struck me from its extreme simplicity, and enclose you a translation of it in the exact measure of the original.* I should have enjoyed crossing Penmaenmaur with you exceedingly; it is a favorite scene of mine, and always strikes me as one formed by nature to be consecrated to some heroic action. It has, most likely, witnessed many a conflict in days of yore, as there is an ancient British circumvallation round one of its peaks, and it is supposed to have been one of the strongholds of the country. My mother and all my family unite in every kind remembrance to Mr. —— and yourself; and allow me to assure you of the regard and esteem with which I am most truly yours, F. HEMANS."

"Bronwylfa, Dec. 19, 1822.

"My dear Miss ——:

". . . . . Although not born in Wales, my long residence here has sufficiently naturalised me to make your admiration of our mountain scenery highly gratifying. I am no stranger to the country around Llangollen, and I dare say you know that its beauty and grandeur derive additional interest both from history and tradition. The ruin which, I dare say, you remarked on the height of rather a grotesque rock above the valley of Llangollen, was formerly the residence of a distinguished Welsh beauty, and the poem in which the Cambrian bard has with much enthusiasm celebrated the perfections of the fair Myfanwy is still extant. I once passed through that scenery at night, when its sublimity was inexpressibly height-

* "The Brandenburgh Harvest Song," published among the "Lays of many Lands."

ened by the fires which had been lighted to burn the gorse on the mountains. The broad masses of light and shadow which they occasioned gave it a character of almost savage grandeur, which made a powerful impression upon my mind.

"I can easily imagine your indignation at the sight of stage-coaches amongst such scenery. You will, therefore, I trust, sympathise with my feelings on finding, upon my last visit to Conway, the *ci-devant* picturesque little island, in the midst of the river, metamorphosed into something like a raised pie, for the better accommodation of the proposed bridge. I am not so moon-struck as to quarrel with civilised life, and all its advantages, but I own I should like occasionally to be transported to some scene where I might see what nature was, when utterly untamed, with her hair *uncurled*, and in all her original wildness. . . . ."

"Bronwylfa, January 31st, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

"I sincerely hope your anxieties on your sister's account have been by this time alleviated, and that your mind will daily become more tranquillised in the improving prospect of her recovery. The intensely cold weather with which we have been visited, must have been very trying to an invalid suffering from the complaint you describe. For my own part, I must say I delight in the utmost rigour of the winter, which almost seems to render it *necessary* that the mind should become fully acquainted with its own resources, and find means, in drawing them forth, to cheer

'With mental light the melancholy day.'

Soft winds and bright blue skies make me, or dispose me to be, a sad idler; and it is only by an effort, and a strong feeling of necessity, that I can fix my mind steadily to any sedentary pursuit, when the sun is shining over all the mountains, and the birds singing 'at heaven's gate;' but I find frost and snow most salutary monitors, and always make exertion my enjoyment during their continuance. I am delighted with your enthusiasm on the subject of the Spanish war, the events of which are so associated in my mind with the most vivid recollections of my early youth, that I could almost fancy I had passed that period of my life in the days of Chivalry, so high and ardent were the feelings they excited. I shall be quite impatient for the entire perusal of Southey's work, which my

brother is going to order for his library. As for . . . I read enough to be quite satisfied, (perhaps satiated would be a better word,) without proceeding further: except . . . . I do not know that I ever read any thing of his with pleasure. His poetry has, to me, such a sickly exotic scent; if I may use such an expression, it *smells of musk*—and what butterfly-winged angels! Compare them with Milton's, the 'severe in youthful beauty,' and do they not remind one of the gaudy cupids with opera-looking festoons of roses, on a Parisian fan?

I do not know whether I mentioned to you that I had been engaged, last summer, in writing words to our national Welsh airs which are just published. I found it a very interesting employment, as it made me acquainted with many traditions and legends of the country, some of which are extremely striking, ... "

In a subsequent letter, allusion is made to the uncertainty which attended the production of the "Vespers of Palermo." "You will smile," it concludes, "when I tell you of my having *stolen* time to-day from much more serious employments, for the very important purpose of making *garlands* for my little boys to dance with, as it is the birth-day of the youngest one."

"Bronwylfa, May 14th, 1823.

"My dear Miss ———,

"I feel very sensible of the kind interest you take in my literary anxieties. If all my friends made as much haste to relieve them as you have done, I should have little to suffer from *suspense* at least, to whatever other pains and penalties 'the feverish being' of an author may be subjected. I am very glad to find that you have been made acquainted with the true causes of my *tragic* disappointment. It is also not a little pleasant to me that I am thus emancipated from the feeling of restraint under which, from the strict injunction of secrecy imposed upon me, (for what purpose I know not,) I found myself, while writing to you on the subject. I could really suspect, if it did not seem almost high treason against the lords of the creation, that this padlock had been fastened upon *my* tongue in order to leave *theirs* the uninterrupted pleasure of first communication: however, be that as it may, I rejoice to have done with mystery and to find myself, according to my favorite bardic expression, 'in the face of the sun, and in the

eye of light.' Do you not think it was a noble motto for all the proceedings of our ancient Welsh bards? and the title also which their order assumed—'They who are free throughout the world,' has always struck me as being particularly fine. Some time or other I must try to make you acquainted with their magnificent principles and system; that is, if you are not so already. How I have wandered from Mr. —— to our old Taliesin, (a much nobler personage in truth,) I really know not; but I was going to tell you, how much, notwithstanding my unavoidable disappointment, I had been gratified with Mr. Kemble's conduct throughout the whole transaction. He has shown so much consideration for my interests, and regard for my name, that I feel perfect confidence in his intentions as to the future. If ever I should write a play with a part expressly . . . . . I shall certainly make it 'out-Herod Herod.' He would, I should think, particularly like to represent an American Indian at the stake, or the Mexican emperor upon the burning coals; and in my opinion, there can be no real grandeur unless *mind* is made the ruling power, and its ascendancy asserted, even amidst the wildest storms of passion. I rejoice that you were so much pleased with the miscellaneous poems attached to the little work of which you have so kindly undertaken the superintendence.* The 'Voice of Spring' expresses some peculiar feelings of my own, although my life has yet been unvisited by any affliction so deeply impressive in all its circumstances as the one you have been called upon to sustain. Yet I cannot but feel every year, with 'the return of the violet,' how much the shadows of my mind have deepened since its last appearance, and to me the spring, with all its joy and beauty, is generally a time of thoughtfulness rather than mirth. I think the most delightful poetry I know upon the subject of this season, is contained in the works of Tieck, a German poet, with whom you are perhaps acquainted; but the feelings he expresses are of a very different character from those I have described to you, seeming all to proceed from an overflowing sense of life and joy. If you have never met with any of his poems, I will get my sister to transcribe some of them for you, (as my own time is so much limited,) on her return from Conway, where she is now with some old friends on a visit.

. . . . . .

* "The Last Constantine, The Siege of Valencia," &c.

"I have not yet seen the book you mention, 'Captain Franklin's Journey,' but from your account it must be painfully interesting. Strange to say, I have hardly had time to read at all lately; I seem to have been 'plunged into a pit of ink,' from which I am only now beginning to extricate myself. When I have quite regained my freedom from it, I hope to have the pleasure of addressing you oftener; in the mean time believe me very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Bronwylfa, May 15th, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . .

"Have you seen a collection of poems by living authors, edited by Joanna Baillie, for the benefit of a friend? She was kind enough to send me a copy, as I was one of her contributors: I mention it to you principally to call your attention, should you meet with the book, to a very fine translation by Sotheby, of Schiller's magnificent '*Lied von der Glocke*,' a piece so very difficult to translate with effect, that I should have hardly thought it possible to give it so much spirit and grace in another language. The other poems in the volume are, I think, inferior to what might be expected from the high names of the authors: I was best pleased with Sir Walter Scott's and Mr. Milman's. I never, until very lately, met with a tragedy of Miss Baillie's, which is, I believe, less generally known than her other works; 'The Family Legend.' I was much pleased with it, particularly her delineation of the heroine. Indeed, nothing in all her writings delights me so much as her general idea of what is beautiful in the female character. There is so much gentle fortitude, and deep self-devoting affection in the women whom she portrays, and they are so perfectly different from the pretty '*un-idea'd* girls,' who seem to form the *beau ideal* of our whole sex in the works of some modern poets. The latter remind me of a foolish saying, I think of Diderot's, that in order to describe a woman, you should write with a pen made of a peacock's feather, and dry the writing with the dust from butterflies' wings. Have you seen the lately published Memoirs of Lady Griseld Baillie? She was an ancestress, I believe, of Joanna's, and her delightful character seems to have been the model her descendant has copied in some of the dramas she introduces. I believe I

never told you how fully I agreed with you in your opinion of the 'Trials of Margaret Lindsay.' The book is certainly full of deep feeling and beautiful language, but there are many passages which, I think, would have been better omitted; and although I can bear as much fictitious woe as most people, I really began to feel it an infliction at last.

"With much regard,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Bronwylfa, July 2nd, 1823.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . "I shall be curious too see Lord F. Gower's Translation of 'Faust.' It is a bold undertaking: that play has always appeared to me one of the most difficult in the German language; some of the scenes are so bewildering, as to leave the author's views and intentions a complete mystery. . . . . I have not forgotten my promise of making you acquainted, at least as far as may be in my power, with the principles and system of the ancient British bards. The idea entertained of the bardic character appears to me particularly elevated and beautiful. The bard was not allowed, in any way, to become a party in political or religious dispute; he was recognised so completely as the herald of peace, under the title of 'Bard of the Isle of Britain,' that a naked weapon was not allowed to be displayed in his presence. He passed unmolested from one hostile country to another, and if he appeared, in his uni-colored robe, (which was azure, being the emblem of peace and truth,) between two contending armies, the battle was immediately suspended. One of the general titles of the order was, 'Those who are free throughout the world,' and their motto, 'The Truth against the World.'"

Further letters of the same series allude to a visitation of death in her family circle; speaking of which Mrs. Hemans says, "You will be surprised to hear that I never *looked on death* before." A letter, bearing a later date, in which reference is made to the approaching representation of the "Vespers of Palermo," is so similar in tone and expression to those addressed to Mr. Milman on the subject, that to insert it would be a fruitless repetition. The same reason makes it unnecessary for me to make use of a letter addressed

to her actively kind friend, in which she mentions its failure. One trait, however deserves notice, as illustrating the tendency to hope, and to comfort, which was so abiding a spring of her character to the last. She describes the satisfaction she has found in the circumstance that the failure of her play has aroused a near and dear member of her family from the state of depression into which he had been plunged by the bereavement alluded to.

"Bronwylfa, March 6th, 1824.

"My dear Miss ——,

. . . . . "I have been very much interested in your account of Iturbide, whose singular fate seems to afford matter for serious reflection. Can you tell me whether he is, as I have heard asserted, a descendant of the ancient Incas, or was the circumstance only invented to excite a romantic interest in his cause? I wish he would publish, instead of a memorial, a history of his life. The revolutions in a powerful *mind*, under circumstances so changeful and extraordinary, would, I think, be more impressive than those of an empire." . . . .

"June 19th, 1824.

. . . . . "I am particularly obliged to you for the transcript of Iturbide's letter to his children, on which I set much value, it is so strikingly characteristic, and so full of the *Spaniard* as well as the father. Your descriptions had taught me to feel so much interest in him, that I heard with regret of his return to Mexico; I should think him so much more likely to be the victim, than the composer, of the disturbances in that country. I look forward with much interest to the promised article upon Chili in the forthcoming Quarterly. I had read that on Mexico with great interest, and thought that it *must* be by Mr. ——. I have heard nothing further on the subject of the 'Vespers:' indeed I do not wish that any attempt should be made to produce it in London, as I am convinced it could have no chance of impartial treatment after all that has passed. If ever I should try the fortune of the theatre again, I must endeavour to ensure the strictest secrecy as to my name, till my fate shall be decided: there is a prejudice, I am satisfied, against a female dramatist, which it would be hardly possible to surmount. I send you some lines which I composed lately on the first appearance of summer. As I think a little piece

of mine, 'The Voice of Spring,' was a favourite of yours, I trust you may be pleased with this as a *pendant* to it. This letter will most probably find you in Somersetshire, where I hope you have enjoyed something like sunshine, which I think cannot but have its influence on the mind and spirits, let philosophers say what they will. I have been making arrangements lately for placing my eldest boy at school, and intend taking him myself about the latter end of next month to Bangor, where he is to remain. It is a sort of epoch in a mother's life, which cannot but at first make her thoughtful, as the time of her own superintendence and influence over her child seems almost to end with this, his first entrance *into the world*, as it certainly must be considered. I shall probably make some stay in Caernarvonshire, as I shall be anxious to visit him once or twice in his new situation before I return home. If your sisters should be with you, pray offer them mine and my sister's kind regards, and believe me always,

"Very truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Nov. 20th, 1824.

. . . . . .

"After the interest you had taught me to feel in the fortunes of poor Iturbide, I really was shocked, as *you* must have been in no ordinary degree, by the sudden intelligence of his violent death. It was impossible not to feel that his proposed attempt must be fraught with danger, yet there was something absolutely startling in so swift a transition from the pride of hope and enterprise to the end of all. Of the immediate circumstances which lead to his death, I could obtain no clear idea from the newspapers in which I saw it mentioned, nor whether the act itself was sanctioned by the Mexican government. Perhaps you can tell me something of the fate of his widow and children. We are just reading Hall's work on South America, which you mention in your last letter, and are exceedingly interested in it. How truly may that be called a *new* world to which he introduces us! I was particularly struck with his visit to the Araucanian territory, which the Spanish poet, Ercilla, has made a sort of classic ground. The noble character of General San Martin, which Captain Hall's temperate style of writing prevents our considering as the least

exaggerated, is really, in our times and circumstances, not less surprising than interesting, and engages every feeling on his side. I am, at peesent, engaged on a poem of some length, the idea of which was suggested to me by some passages in your friend Mr. Blanco White's delightful writings. It relates to the sufferings of a Spanish Protestant in the time of Philip the Second; and is supposed to be narrated by the sufferer himself, who escapes to America. I am very much interested in my subject, and hope to complete the poem in the course of the winter. I remained some time in the Bangor neighborhood about Midsummer, and had the satisfaction of leaving my boy quite happy at school, where he is making a rapid progress. His brothers are all well at home, where I hope their noisy steps and voices will long resound." . . .

"Bronwylfa, Jan. 26, 1825.

"My dear Miss ——,

"It appears so long since I have heard from you, that I have for some time past been inclined to fear some illness in your family may have prevented your writing. I shall be truly glad to know from yourself that this is not the case, and that you received my last letter in safety. You will find from Mr. —— that I am again likely to appear before the public. I cannot help feeling more anxiety than usual on the occasion. I believe it is the ill-nature apparently excited by the 'Vespers' which has disagreeably enlarged my knowledge of the world, and given me a timidity to which, at least in its present degree, I was before a stranger. But I have no choice, and cannot do otherwise than persevere in the course to which circumstances introduced me. . . . We, that is, my mother and sister, with myself and my family, intend to change our residence about the time of this event.* I am anxious to settle near some great public school, of which I could have the advantage for my boys. We are as yet quite undecided, but I fear our removal from this country is unavoidable, as its beauty and retirement, however dear to me, must not overpower in my mind, what I daily feel more and more to be the interests of my children. I sometimes think it might be more advantageous to myself to reside nearer London, but I fear

* The close of April is the time referred to—the event, her eldest brother's second marriage.

the expenses at Harrow or Eton would be too great not to overbalance the recommendations." . . . .

"Rhyllon, Nov. 24.

"My dear Miss ——,

"I should have written to greet you immediately on your arrival, of which we have heard with sincere pleasure, but I hardly thought it likely that, with so many new and striking objects to surround you, you could have been so punctual to the purposed time of return. I owe you many thanks for your most interesting letter from Poland, which, besides the gratification such a proof of a friend's remembrance must always afford, gave me much information with regard to scenes and people hardly better known to us than those of another hemisphere. How much and how delightfully must your store of ideas and recollections have been enlarged by this interesting tour! I believe it was the perusal of Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope,' in early childhood, which first excited my feelings of sympathy for the Poles. My sister became acquainted with some of that nation during her residence on the continent, and the deep and indignant sense they entertained of their country's degradation made much the same impression on her mind which it appears to have done on yours. Such a feeling, if general, is surely the best pledge of eventual deliverance. I hope we may expect, some day, to be instructed as well as amused, by the observations which Mr. ——— must have made on his journey, and which must be well worth bringing before the public: the ground certainly affords ample room for an enlightened mind to expatiate upon, and is not, like that of Italy, so thoroughly beaten, that a person must be stupid who could not find his way over Alps and Appenines, and through the very streets of Rome, by the help of his predecessors alone. . . . . I do not know what I can tell you of myself and my family that will at all repay you for the pleasures your late letters have bestowed upon me. Whilst you have been hearing new languages spoken, amidst scenes of barbaric magnificence, as well as almost uncivilised rudeness, we have been quietly settling down into our new residence, planting roses, training honey-suckles, and keeping our grass-plots in order—very delightful occupations certainly, but such as afford few materials wherewith to amuse our correspondents. That last word, however, reminds me of an interesting letter by which

I have been lately surprised from a Professor in the Cambridge University, New England. He informs me that an edition of my writings is wished for at Boston, and most kindly offers to superintend its publication. He has also sent me some American works on religious subjects, with which I have been much pleased. I am very much obliged to Mr. ——— for his kindness in procuring me the German books I wished; I shall also be glad to have De Lamartine's Poems, of which I have heard a good deal, but do not possess them. I do not think I shall wish to have *Die Goldne Vliess*, as in general I prefer the romantic to the classic poetry of Germany. But perhaps you can tell me whether it is Jason's golden fleece, or the order of knighthood so called, which gives its title to the work, as the latter would be far more attractive to me. . . .

"The Siege of Valencia, The last Constantine, and other Poems," were published in the course of the year 1823. This volume was marked by more distinct evidences of originality than any of Mrs. Hemans' previous works. None of her after poems contain finer bursts of strong, fervid, indignant poetry than "The Siege of Valencia:" its story—a thrilling conflict between maternal love and the inflexible spirit of chivalrous honor—afforded to her an admirable opportunity of giving utterance to the two master interests of her mind. It is a tale that will bear a second reading—though it must be confessed, that, as in the case of "the Vespers of Palermo," somewhat of a monotony of coloring is thrown over its scenes by the unchanged employment of a lofty and enriched phraseology, which would have gained in emphasis by its being more sparingly used. Ximena, too, all glowing and heroic as she is: stirring up the sinking hearts of the besieged citizens, with her battle songs of the Cid, and dying, as it were, of that strain of triumph—is too spiritual, too saintly, wholly to carry away the sympathies. Our imagination is kindled by her splendid, high-toned devotion—our tears are called forth by the grief of her mother, the stately Elmina; broken down but not degraded, by the agony of maternal affection, to connive at a treachery she is too noble wholly to carry through. The scenes with her husband are admirable —some of her speeches absolutely startle us with their passion and intensity—the following for instance:

Love! love! there are soft smiles and gentle words,
And there are faces skilful to put on
The look we trust in—and 'tis mockery all!
—A faithless mist, a desert-vapor, wearing
The brightness of clear waters, thus to cheat
The thirst that semblance kindled!—There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world, no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart. It is but pride, wherewith
To his fair son the father's eye doth turn,
Watching his growth. Aye, on the boy he looks,
The bright glad creature springing in his path,
But as the heir of his great name, the young
And stately tree, whose rising strength ere long
Shall bear his trophies well.—And this is love!
This is *man's* love!—What marvel?—*you* ne'er made
Your breast the pillow of his infancy,
While to the fulness of your glad heart's heavings
His fair cheek rose and fell; and his bright hair
Waved softly to your breath!—*You* ne'er kept watch
Beside him till the last pale star had set,
And morn, all dazzling, as in triumph, broke
On your dim weary eye: not *yours* the face
Which, early faded thro' fond care for him,
Hung o'er his sleep, and, duly as heaven's light
Was there to greet his waking! *You* ne'er smoothed
His couch, ne'er sung him to his rosy rest,
Caught his least whisper, when his voice from yours
Had learn'd soft utterance; pressed your lip to his,
When fever parch'd it; hush'd his wayward cries
With patient, vigilant, never wearied love!
No; these are *woman's* tasks!—In these her youth,
Her bloom of cheek, and buoyancy of heart,
Steal from her all unmarked—My boys! my boys!
Hath vain affection borne with all for this?
—— Why were ye given me?

But enough has been said to indicate, and my purpose is not to criticise. The volume in question contains, also, the "Voice of Spring?" one of the first of what may be called Mrs. Hemans' fanciful lyrics, which presently became as familiar as the music of some popular composer, when brought to our doors by wandering minstrels. It contains, too, the "Songs of the Cid,"—he was always one of her favorite heroes;—perhaps, among all her chivalresque ballads, none will be found superior to "The Cid's funeral procession." The "Last Constantine" is in her colder and more classical manner.

It would be wearisomely superfluous to enumerate the long series of lyrics which she now poured forth with increasing

earnestness and rapidity, and without which none of the lighter periodicals of the day made its appearance. One or two, however, must be mentioned, as certain to survive so long as the short poem shall be popular in England. "The Treasures of the Deep," "The Hour of Death," "The Graves of a Household," "The Cross in the Wilderness," are all admirable. With these, too, may be mentioned those poems in which a short descriptive *recitative* (to borrow a word from the opera) introduces a lyrical burst of passion, or regret, or lamentation. This form of composition became so especially popular in America, that hardly a poet has arisen since the influence of Mrs. Hemans' genius made itself felt on the other side of the Atlantic, who has not attempted something of a similar subject and construction. "The Hebrew Mother" has been followed by an infinite number of sketches from scripture: this lyric too, should be particularized as having made friends for its authoress among those of the ancient faith in England. Among the last strangers who visited her, eager to thank her for the pleasure her writings had afforded them, were a Jewish gentleman and lady who entreated to be admitted by the author of the "Hebrew Mother."

Perhaps, however, the most touching of all these shorter poems is the lyric, "Korner and his Sister,"—the first in which, as far as I can trace, the influence of Mrs. Hemans' German studies is perceptible. "Her knowledge of the language, sufficiently to read and understand it," says her sister, "seems to my recollection things as far back as if she had been born with it; but I think that her great delight in it may be dated from the year 1821, when I myself came home from Germany brim-ful of enthusiasm, and with a good many books which were new to her; and our brother being then at the Vienna embassy, used to supply us most liberally with *Deutsche Classiker* (German Classics) of all sorts. I well remember the first thing we read together after my coming home. Though a trifle that seemed like the spark that was to kindle a great flame. It was that little piece of Schiller's the "*Nadowessiche Todtenklage*" (Nadowessian Dirge). She was enchanted with its melody, and particularly struck with that verse—

> Wohl ihm er ist hingegangen,
> Wo kein schnee mehr ist.*

* It is well for him, he is gone away
Where there is no more snow.

the same idea with her own

There shall be no more snow,

in the "Tyrolese Evening Hymn."

The three following letters, relating to the beautiful lyric in question, and giving Mrs. Hemans' own feelings with regard to its subject, were addressed to Mr. G. F. Richardson, the author of a Life of Korner and of translations from his Poems. It may be as well to remark, that "Korner and his Sister" had been forwarded to the father of that fiery-hearted hero, and was by him translated into German. The poem called forth a few simple and heartfelt lines of acknowledgment.

"Dear Sir,

"A very few days have passed since I had the pleasure of receiving your interesting works, and I delayed writing until I could tell you that I had gratified myself by their perusal. I must first, however, thank you for the elegant lines with which you have honoured my name in the Life of Korner, and which cannot but render the work so much the more valuable to me. You have, I think, been particularly successful in some of the most difficult pieces, especially the wild 'Sword Song' the peculiarities of which are so great, that I should have hardly thought it possible to give it so much effect in English. The 'Fatherland,' too, that beautiful and thrilling strain, loses nothing of its original free spirit in your hands. I sincerely hope that the success of this highly interesting work may encourage you to proceed in the rich paths of German literature. Korner has ever been an object of peculiar enthusiasm to me; his character is one of which it is impossible to read without a feeling almost of *pain* that such a spirit has passed away, with all its high and holy thoughts, and is never to be known to us on this side the grave. How mournful it seems to think of his aged father and mother surviving both their gifted children! They would, I am sure, be deeply gratified by your intended tribute of respect to their sorrows, and to their son's memory. I know not the exact address of the father, but a copy directed to Monsieur Von Korner, and sent under cover to Madame de Schulze, (cadette,) nee de Struensee, 78, Unter den Linden, Berlin, would be safely forwarded to him. My sister is in correspondence with this lady, and will write to prepare her for the arrival of the packet, which had better, if possible, be forwarded in the ambassador's bag.

"I will not apologise for the mistake respecting your name, which has had the agreeable consequence of introducing to me your own elegant 'Poetic Hours.' Allow me to assure you, dear sir, of the pleasure I should have in seeing you here, should any thing induce you to visit this country;—and believe me to be, very truly,

"Your much obliged,

"FELICIA HEMANS.

"Rhyllon, St. Asaph, July 25th, 1827."

"Sir,

"I beg to thank you for the great pleasure afforded me by your very interesting letter. I rejoice to find that you are in direct communication with Korner's father; it is a privilege you have well earned. The message you have had the kindness to transmit me from that revered old man delighted me much. I *do* read German, as you suppose, and could therefore fully appreciate its affecting simplicity. The idea of Korner's death-day struck my imagination forcibly, and gave rise to the inclosed lines,* which I should be much obliged by your transmitting, with your own interesting memorial, to his parents. Though the last anniversary of that day will have long been past before they receive the lines, yet I think it cannot but soothe them to find that it has been remembered in a distant land.

"With sincere esteem, believe me, sir,

"Your obliged and faithful servant,

"FELICIA HEMANS.

'Rhyllon, September 7th.

"Dear Sir,

"Allow me cordially to thank you for the very high gratification you have been the medium of procuring me. "*Theodor Korner's Vater*"—it is indeed a title beautifully expressing all the holy pride which the memory of '*Die treuen Todten*'† must inspire, and awakening every good and high feeling to its sound. I shall prise the lines as a relic. Will you be kind enough to assure M. Korner, with my grateful respects, of the value which will be attached to them, a value so greatly enhanced by their being in his own hand. They are very beautiful, I think, in their somewhat antique and *treuherzig*‡ simplicity, worthy to have proceeded from "*Theodor Korner's Vater.*" I am very glad that he so fully

* "The Death Day of Kroner." † The Faithful Dead. ‡ True hearted.

appreciates your translations, and enters into the spirit of your ideas on his sons' works; and sincerely wishing you all success in a career so well begun, I beg you to believe me, dear sir,

"Your much obliged,
"FELICIA HEMANS."

It will be yet more clearly seen, from further portions of Mrs. Hemans' correspondence, with what devotion and gratitude she regarded German literature; she spoke of its language as "rich and *affectionate*, in which I take much delight:"—how she gratefully referred to its study as having expanded her mind and opened to her new sources of intellectual delight and exercise. For a while, too, she may have been said to have written under the shadow of its mysticism: but this secondary influence had passed away some time before her death. It is not the lot of high minds, though they may pass through and linger in regions where thought loses itself in obscurity, to terminate their career there. The "Lays of many Lands," most of which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine, then edited by Mr. Campbell, were, we are told by himself, suggested by Herder's "*Stimmen der Volker in Liedern.*" Her next volume was formed of a collection of these, preceded by "The Forest Sanctuary."

Mrs. Hemans considered this poem as almost, if not altogether, the best of her works. She would sometimes say, that in proportion to the praise which had been bestowed upon others of her less carefully meditated and shorter compositions, she thought it had hardly met with its fair share of success: for it was the first continuous effort in which she dared to write from the fulness of her own heart—to listen to the promptings of her genius freely and fearlessly. The subject was suggested by a passage in one of the letters of Don Leucadio Doblado, and was wrought upon by her with that eagerness and fervor which almost *command* corresponding results. I have heard Mrs. Hemans say, that the greater part of this poem was written in no more picturesque a retreat than a laundry, to which, as being detached from the house, she resorted for undisturbed quiet and leisure. When she read it, while in progress, to her mother and sister, they were surprised to tears at the increased power displayed in it. She was not prone to speak with self-contentment of her own works; but, perhaps, *the one* favorite descriptive passage was that picture of a sea burial in the second canto.

. . . . . She lay a thing for earth's embrace,
To cover with spring-wreaths. For earth's—the wave
That gives the bier no flowers, makes moan above her grave!

On the mid-seas a knell!—for man was there,—
Anguish and love, the mourner with his dead!
A long, low, tolling knell—a voice of prayer—
Dark glassy waters, like a desert spread,—
And the pale shining Southern Cross on high,
Its faint stars fading from a solemn sky,
Where mighty clouds before the dawn grew red:—
Were these things round me? Such o'er memory sweep
Wildly when aught brings back that burial of the deep.

Then the broad lonely sunrise, and the plash
Into the sounding waves!—around her head
They parted, with a glancing moment's flash,
Then shut—and all was still. . . . .

The whole poem, whether in its scenes of superstition—the Auto da Fe—the dungeon—the flight, or in its delineation of the mental conflicts of its hero—or in its forest pictures of the free west, which offer such a delicious repose to the mind, is full of happy thoughts and turns of expression. Four lines of peculiar delicacy and beauty recur to me as I write, too strongly to be passed by. They are from a character of one of the martyr sisters:

And if she mingled with the festive train,
It was but as some melancholy star
Beholds the dance of shepherds on the plain,
In its bright stillness present, though afar.

But the entire episode of "Queen-like Teresa—radiant Inez"—is wrought up with a nerve and an impulse, which men of renown have failed to reach. The death of the latter, if, perhaps, it be a little too *romantic* for the stern realities of the scene, is so beautifully told, that it cannot be read without strong feeling, nor carelessly remembered. And most beautiful, too, are the sudden out-bursts of thankfulness—of the quick, happy consciousness of liberty with which the narrator of this ghastly sacrifice, interrupts the tale, to re-assure himself—

Sport on, my happy child! for thou art free!

The character of the convert's wife, Leonor,—devotedly clinging to his fortunes, without a reproach or a murmur, while her heart trembles before him, as though she were in the presence of a lost spirit,—is one of those, in which Mrs.

Hemans' individual mode of thought and manner of expression are most happily impersonated. As a whole, she was hardly wrong in her own estimate of this poem: and on recently returning to it, I have been surprised to find how well it bears the tests and trials with which it is only either fit or rational to examine works of the highest order of mind. But here, also, would criticism be impertinent.

The next work of Mrs. Hemans, and the one by which she is most universally known, was the "Records of Woman," published in 1828. In this, to use her own words, "there is more of herself to be found" than in any preceding composition. But even the slightest analysis of these beautiful legends would be superfluous; suffice it to say, that they were not things of meditation, but imagined and uttered in the same breath; like every line that she wrote, as far as possible from being a studied exercise. It is true, that in some lyrics more than others, her individual feelings are eagerly put forth—in those, for instance, wherein aspirations after another world are expressed, or which breathe the weary pining language of home sickness, or in which she utters her abiding sense of the insufficiency of fame to satisfy a woman's heart, however its possession may gratify her vanity—or wherein she speaks with a passionate self-distrust of her own art, of the impossibility of performance to keep pace with desire. The fervor with which these were poured forth, seriously endangered a frame already undermined by too ardent a spirit, whose consuming work had been aided by a personal self-neglect, childish to wilfulness. So perilously, indeed, was she excited by the composition of Mozart's Requiem, that she was prohibited by her physican from any further exercise of her art, for some weeks after it was written. Few more genuine out-bursts of feeling have been ever poured forth than the three following verses of that poem.

"Yet I have known it long:
Too restless and too strong
Within this clay hath been the o'ermastering flame;
Swift thought that came and went,
Like torrents o'er me sent,
Have shaken as a reed my thrilling frame.

Like perfumes on the wind,
Which none may stay or bind,
The beautiful comes floating through my soul;
I strive with yearning vain,

The spirit to detain
Of the deep harmonies that past me roll?

Therefore disturbing dreams
Trouble the secret streams,
And founts of music that o'erflow my breast;
Something far more divine
Than may on earth be mine,
Haunts my worn heart, and will not let it rest.

Most of the poems above referred to, were written at Rhyllon; the last and most favorite of Mrs. Hemans' residence at Wales. Some of them will be found colored by a shadow which had recently passed over her lot—the death of her mother. To this, which she always felt as an irreparable loss, will be found not a few touching allusions in many following letters.

A small woodland dingle, near Rhyllon, was her favorite retreat: here she would spend long summer mornings to read, and project, and compose, while her children played about her. "Whenever one of us brought her a new flower," writes one of them, "she was sure to introduce it into her next poem. She has unconsciously described this haunt over and over again with affectionate distinctness; it is the scene referred to in the "Hour of Romance," and in the sonnet which is printed among her "Poetical Remains."

Still are the cowslips from thy bosom springing,
O far-off grassy dell?—And dost thou see,
When southern winds first wake the vernal singing,
The star-gleam of the wood-anemone?
Doth the shy ring-dove haunt thee yet—the bee
Hang on thy flowers, as when I breathed farewell
To their wild blooms? and round the beechen tree
Still in green softness, doth the moss bank swell?"

Many of the imaginations which floated through her brain in this retirement, were lost in the more interrupted and responsible life, which followed Mrs. Hemans' departure from Wales; when the breaking up of her household, on the marriage of one of her family, and the removal of another into Ireland, threw her exclusively upon her own resources, and compelled her to make acquaintance with an "eating, drinking, buying, bargaining" world, with which, from her disposition and habits, she was ill fitted to cope. One of these unfinished works was the "Portrait Gallery," of which one episode, "The lady of the Castle," is introduced in the "Records."

Before proceeding to a period—which must have greater interest for the reader, inasmuch as these memorials will more exclusively consist of such as are furnished by Mrs. Hemans' own correspondence—it may be well to allude to the fame which she had already gained in America by her writings. The circulation of these was almost unprecedented; and its influence, as has been already remarked, might be presently traced in the host of imitators that sprung up there. She took an honest and affectionate pleasure in the fame and friendship gained for her by her works on the other side of the Atlantic. The intimacy she formed with Professor Norton must be expressly mentioned, as being lasting and cordial. This gentleman undertook the superintendence of the publication of her works in America; and she justly regarded him to the last as one of her firmest friends. One of the first, if not the very first, of the communications which afterwards became so frequent, was a packet, with a letter of self-introduction containing offers of service which were well borne out by after performance. This was lost upon the Ulverstone sands by the party to whose charge it had been intrusted; and its contents discovered, drying at a little inn fire, by one who forwarded them to their proper place of destination. Mrs. Hemans prised the letter, and the book which accompanied it—a life of Mr. Charles Eliot—all the more for the vicissitudes they had undergone before reaching her; the book never wholly lost the traces of its submersion. With Dr. Channing, too, she was in the habit of a close and frequent correspondence: it will be seen how highly she valued his lofty cast of thought, and the beautiful holy morality inculcated in his noble writings, by the frequent and almost reverential mention of him in the following letters. And though no two people could differ more strongly in their religious and political views, (if hers indeed may be called *views*, which were in fact the involuntary reflections of the opinions of those nearest and dearest to her,) she was of too generous a nature to be narrowed in her sympathies, by any differences of sect, or party, or nation. For the counsel of Dr. Channing she had the highest possible value; and I have regretted much that I have not permission to enrich my memorials by the letters which passed between them.

It should be told, too, that so general was the interest excited in America, that a most liberal offer of a certain income, and still more, of a friendly welcome, was made to her, in the hope of tempting her to take up her residence

in Boston, for the purpose of conducting a periodical. She would smile at her own unfitness for such an undertaking, while she felt with all her heart the flattering and substantial kindness of the proposal. While she was residing in the neighborhood of Liverpool, she was unceasingly sought out by American visitors. I remember seeing a beautiful girl from New York, as much excited and awe-struck at the thought of being admitted to her presence, as the Lady Fannys and Lady Bettys whom Northcote saw reverentially peeping through the door of the room where England's tragic muse was sitting—"Her friends at home," said she, "would think so much of her, for having seen Mrs. Hemans." Some of the intrusions and offers of service to which this American reputation led, were, it is true, whimsical enough. One lady beset her, with a frame of family miniatures in hand, and, on parting with her, and remonstrating with her on the melancholy tone of her poems, begged leave to introduce a substitute who would act in her absence as a counsellor and cheering influence; and, to use her own phrase, might be relied upon as a "perfect walking-stick of friendship." But such strange homage was any thing but exclusively transatlantic; few, indeed, who have led a life so retired have been more buzzed about by the insect swarm, who love to make an idle noise in the neighborhood of the gifted, than Mrs. Hemans.—The next chapter will treat of something far more genuine than such empty and capricious adulation.

CHAPTER IV.

Memorials of Mrs. Hemans' female friendships—Letters to Mrs. Joanna Baillie—Letters to Miss Mitford—Letter to Mrs. Howitt—Miss Jewsbury—Brief notice of her life and writings—First introduction to Wordsworth's Poems—Correspondence between Mrs. Hemans and Miss Jewsbury.

Mrs. Hemans had now taken her place in the circle of living poets, as one who possessed powers and feelings and peculiarities of her own. The world had recognised an original mind, speaking in the perfect music of her verse:—had perceived that the Spirit of romance and chivalry had found another incarnation, although, being this time clothed in a female form, it was united with affections deeper, if less strikingly picturesque, than mere devotion to beauty, or mere fidelity to the knightly vow of valor and courtesy. In like manner, at a later period, has the homely domestic ballad, by passing into female hands, been revived in all its plainness and pathos, without any of the grossness, which, of old, stained its strength. An eloquent modern critic, (Mrs. Jameson) has rightly said that Mrs. Hemans' poems "could not have been written by a man." Their love is without selfishness—their passion pure from sensual coarseness—their high heroism (and as instances may be mentioned, among many, "The Switzer's Wife," and the "Lady of Provence.") unsullied by any base alloy of ambition. In their religion, too, she is essentially womanly—fervent, trustful, unquestioning, "hoping on, hoping ever"—in spite of a painfully acute consciousness of the peculiar trials of her sex—of that lot, so beautifully described in one of her lyrics, which is

> . . . . . silent tears to weep,
> And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour,
> And sumless riches from affection's deep,
> To pour on withered reeds—a wasted shower,—
> And to make idols, and to find them clay,
> And to bewail that worship . . . . .

It was about this time, then, that the literary friendships of

Mrs. Hemens began to grow more numerous. She might now claim the companionship of the gifted. But in all her advances and answers, she will be found self-distrustful, open, with a child-like gratitude, to words of kindness and encouragement, —seeking rather sympathy than praise. The following letters, all addressed to correspondents of her own sex, like herself distinguished in the literary world, give so fair a picture of her mind in all its *womanliness*, as to make further preface or analysis superfluous. The very repetitions they contain have a significance, as evidencing the closeness with which pure thoughts and gracious feelings were woven into the tissue of her daily life.

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"Rhyllon, April 8th.

"My dear Madam,

"I have received and read with much pleasure the little tract with which you have so kindly favored me, and which I cannot but think, from its persuasive tone, and simple appeal at once to the highest motives by which our nature is capable of being actuated, eminently calculated to be useful. I have made my own children read it, although, I thank Heaven, none of them have dispositions at all requiring such admonition; but I wish to bring them acquainted with *you*, my dear madam,—some of whose works they have already read,—in the amiable character of a teacher of the poor. The remark made by one of them I think will please you,—"How very good it was, mamma, of the lady who wrote 'Ethwald' to write this!" I shall send out two of these little tracts for my American friends, to whom, I doubt not, the same idea will occur, though it may be expressed in more eloquent language; and the other shall be given to the friends of the national school here. I am exceedingly glad to find that you are so much pleased with the writings of Dr. Channing. The discourse you mentioned, on the Evidences of Christianity, I have always considered as one of his most powerful productions, and I rejoice that by your influence its usefulness is likely to be so far extended. Its author will, I know, be highly gratified by this intelligence, which I shall communicate to him when I next write. He is an Unitarian, and, as you will observe from his Essay on Milton, a zealous advocate of that cause; but surely there is enough in the path which we

all tread together, to make us feel that we are "the children of one Father," and to prevent our allowing difference of opinion to divide our hearts. You are very kind to take so much pleasure in the approbation with which my writings seem to be honored. Such praise will ever be valuable, yet it comes to me now mingled with something of mournfulness, for the ear to which it ever brought the greatest delight has recently been closed. The last winter deprived me of my truest and tenderest friend—the mother by whose unwearied spirit of love and hope I was encouraged to bear on through all the obstacles which beset my onward path. I have had much to contend with, and often have I thought, and often, perhaps, may I yet have to think of your own affecting lines,

> When the world looks cold and surly on us,
> Where can we turn to meet a warmer eye,
> With such sure confidence as to *a mother's*?

But I ought to apologize for troubling you thus with my own sorrows. I will do so, and my apology shall be, that the kindly warmth of heart which seems to breathe over all your writings, and the power of early association over my mind, make me feel, whenever I address you, as if I were writing to a friend. With the sincerest respect, believe me, dear Madam,

"Your truly obliged,
"FELICIA HEMANS."

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"Rhyllon, May 31st, 1827.

"My dear Madam,

"Your last letter afforded me a gratification for which I most sincerely thank you. I delight to think that I have passed the bounds of a *mere* literary correspondence, and may I hope address you as a friend. My children were much pleased by your kind mention of them; the one who had been reading Ethwald with such interest, was not a little amused to find himself designated *as a girl:* I have none but boys; a circumstance I often am inclined to regret; for I married so young that they are even now beginning to spring from childhood into youth themselves, and in the course of a few years I must expect that they will long for, and be

launched into another world than the green fields in which they are now contented to play around me. Let me, however, be thankful for the happiness I at present enjoy, and for the privilege which peculiar circumstances have afforded me, and which is granted to so few mothers, of being able myself to superintend their education, and give what I hope will be enduring impressions to their minds. Now that I am upon this subject, dear madam, I am strongly tempted to relate a little anecdote, which I think will interest you—mammas are always prone to believe their children *must* be interesting—of one of them at eleven years old. I had been reading to him Lord Byron's magnificent address to the sea—

'Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean,—roll!

He listened in almost breathless attention, and exclaimed, the moment I had finished it, 'It is very grand indeed!—but how much finer it would have been, mamma, if he had said at the close, that God had measured out all those waters with the hollow of his hand!' I really could not help being struck with the true wisdom thus embodied in the simplicity of childhood.

"You say, my dear madam, that you wish you had something to send me. May I thus, emboldened, ask you for something which I have long wished to possess, but not been able to procure as I believe it is at present out of print,—your delightful little drama of the 'Beacon?'—or perhaps you can guide me as to where I may meet with it. I have an edition of your works containing the Plays on the passions, (with the exception of Orra,) Ethwald, Rayner, and Constantine; and I have the 'Family Legend' separate, but the 'Beacon' I have not met with since I read it almost in childhood, and made some extracts from it, which would amuse you if you could see them in the school-girl hand of fourteen or fifteen. That heart-cheering song,

'The absent will return,—the long, long lost be found!

I remember being more especially pleased with; it breathes such a spirit of hope and joy; and I am by nature inclined to both, though early cares have chastened and subdued a mind, perhaps but too ardent originally.

"I have another favor to request; it is the permission to dedicate to you, of whose name my whole sex may be proud, a work which I shall propably publish in the course of this present year, and which is to be called 'Records of Woman.' If you do not object to this, I will promise that the inscription

shall be as simple as you could desire. I very much wish to bring out the book in Edinburgh, provided my friends can make desirable arrangements for me with any of the publishers there; but I hope you will allow me to offer you, whether in your own country or mine, this little token of unfeigned respect.

"I mentioned to you, in my last letter, the dear and excellent mother of whom I have been deprived; the truly kind feeling with which you allude to the subject encourages me to send you a few lines, which possess a value in my eyes from their having been the last poetry of mine she was permitted to enjoy. I read them to her, by her bed side, about three weeks before I was deprived of her; and as the tender pleasure with which she heard them has rendered them to me 'a thing set apart,' I mean not to publish them, and they will be new to you.* They were written for a very interesting Scotch family of the name of Lyndsay.

"One of the little tracts with which you have favored me, I lately sent to Lady ———, with whom I almost think you must be acquainted. She values it highly, and said of it, in a letter I lately received from her, 'What a delightful trait, in a really *great* mind, to have produced such a thing!' You have made me feel so much at my ease when I write to you, my dear madam, that the only danger seems to be lest my letters should outrun all bounds of moderation: it is so pleasant to write as if one were talking by the fireside in winter, or on some quiet garden-seat in summer-time. I must, however, have done at last, assuring you how faithfully and respectfully,

"I am yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

TO MISS BAILLIE.

"April 12th, 1828.

"My Dear Madam,

"It seems very long since I have had the pleasure of any communication with you; but this privation has been my own fault, or rather my misfortune; for a good deal of illness during the winter compelled me to give all other occupation, for that particularly uninteresting one—taking care of myself, or rather allowing others to take care of me. I know not how

* The lines in question, "A Domestic Scene," were afterwards published among the "Hymns for Childhood."

it is, but I always feel so ashamed of the apparent egotism and selfishness attendant on indisposition—the muffling one's self up, taking the warmest place, shrinking from the mirthful noises of those who are full of health, &c. &c.—that I believe I am apt to fall into the contrary extreme, and so, in the end, to occasion ten times more trouble than I should have done with a little proper submission. But a truce with the remembrance of indisposition, now that the spring is really come forth with all her singing-birds and violets: it seems as if sadness had no right to a place amongst the bright and fair things of the season.

"I am now expecting very soon to hear from my American friends, in reply to the packet which contained your dispatches for them, and will not fail to write as soon as I receive any communication from Professor Norton for you. Dr. Channing has lately published a very noble essay on the character of Napoleon, occasioned by Sir Walter Scott's Life of that dazzling, but most *unheroic* personage. I wish you may meet with it; I am sure that the lofty thoughts embodied by its writer, in his own fervid eloquence, could not fail to delight you; and his high views of moral beauty are really freshening to the heart, which longs to pour itself forth in love and admiration, and finds so little in the every-day world whereon such feelings may repose.

"The little volume, 'Records of Woman,' which you kindly gave me permission to inscribe to you, is now in the press, and I hope I shall soon be able to send you a copy; and that the dedication, which is in the simplest form, will be honored by your approval. Mr. Blackwood is its publisher. I do not know whether you may have heard of the interest which Sir Walter Scott has latterly most kindly taken in some music of my sister's composition, accompanying words of mine. One song in particular. 'The Captive Knight,' struck him as being '*si chevaleresque*,' to use his own word on the occasion, that he has been quite bent on its publication, and it will in consequence be brought out and dedicated to him. I think you may, perhaps, like to see the poetry of it, which I inclose for you. I am to lose this, my only sister,—indeed I may almost say, my only companion,—very shortly; she is about to change her name and home, and remove very far from me. O how many deaths there are in the world for the affections!" . . . .

TO MISS MITFORD.

"Rhyllon, St. Asaph, June 9th, 1827.

"Madam,

"I can hardly feel that I am addressing an entire stranger in the author of 'Our Village,' and yet I know it is right and proper, that I should apologise for the liberty I am taking. But, really after having accompanied you again, and again, as I have done, in 'violetting' and seeking for wood-sorrel: after having been with you to call upon Mrs. Allen in 'the dell,' and becoming thoroughly acquainted with 'May and Lizzy,' I cannot but hope, that you will kindly pardon my intrusion, and that my name may be sufficiently known to you to plead my cause. There are some writers whose works we cannot read without feeling as if we really *had* looked with them upon the scenes they bring before us, and as if such communion had almost given us a claim to something more than the mere intercourse between author and 'gentle reader.' Will you allow me to say that *your* writings have this effect upon me, and that you have taught me in making me know and love your 'Village' so well, to wish for further knowledge, also, of *her* who has so vividly impressed its dingles and copses upon my imagination, and peopled them so cheerily with healthful and happy beings? I believe, if I could be personally introduced to you, that I should in less than five minutes begin to enquire about Lucy, and the lilies of the valley, and whether you had succeeded in peopling that shady border in your own territories 'with those shy flowers.' My boys, the constant companions of my walks, about *our* village, and along our two pretty rivers, the Elwy and the Clwyd, are not less interested in your gipsies young and old, your heroes of the cricket ground, and above all—Jack Hatch!—woeful and amazed did they all look, when it was found that Jack Hatch could die! But I really must come to the aim and object of this letter, which I fear you may almost, begin to look upon as 'prose run mad.' I dare say you laugh sometimes, as I am inclined to do myself, at the prevailing mania for autographs: but a very kind friend of mine in a distant country does no such thing, and I am making a collection for him, which I should think, (and he, too, I am sure) very much enriched by your name. If you do me the favor to comply with this request, it will give me great pleasure to hear from you, under cover to the Bishop of Asaph, to whom I should have sent this

letter to be franked, but that being ignorant of your address, I am obliged to entrust it to a bookseller in town.

"With sincere esteem,

"I beg you to believe me, Madam,

"Your faithful servant,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

"Rhyllon, St. Asaph, July 16th, 1827.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"A thousand thanks to you for your kind and frank letter, so like what I should have expected from you, and what I *did* expect, that I almost wonder I was not disappointed, for how seldom are our expectations on which one has loved to dwell, fully realized! I bestow this *truism* upon you, under the immediate influence of disappointed feeling, having arranged for myself a very pleasant walk yesterday evening, and having been *way-laid* and prevented from going, so I am naturally disposed to moralise a little in consequence. I hope your '*Maying*' was not frustrated in a similar manner, but that a living and breathing picture of it may one day be presented to me in one of your delightful village sketches. The last of these, that I read, (Whitsun Eve,) made me long to sit with you, 'under that dark bower, watching the bee-bird;' I was very glad to meet with my old friend May, in the same piece; I really feared she had been gathered to her fathers, and succeeded by 'Mossy' with whom lately I became acquainted, and next to 'an old familiar face,' one misses, I think, an old familiar *name*, which has made for itself a nestling place in one's imagination. I had the pleasure of passing a very agreeable evening lately with ——— and his family, who were passing through St. Asaph, and visited me on their way; I found that he was in correspondence with you, though not personally acquainted; I wished I could have drawn you hither on a piece of Prince Houssein's precious tapestry, to join us in a walk we all took together, and during which we talked much of you and your writings. He had two sweet daughters with him; the younger, a fair, quiet and thoughtful looking creature, reminded me at once, of the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' and of your own Ellen in the 'Sisters:'—is not that pretty story of Charlotte and Ellen Page, called 'The Sisters?' I have not the book near me at this moment. Would any thing tempt you, my dear Miss Mitford, or is it within the bounds of possibility that you could be induced to visit me at

St. Asaph? The most cordial reception I could promise you, and you would find here new scenes, new people with many marked peculiarities (for the Welsh character is by no means yet merged in the English,) on which to exercise your powers. I wish you would think of it; and bring May with you, and we will have rambles and nut-gatherings and sketching parties to your heart's content. I beg my best compliments to your father, and am,

"With esteem,
"Very faithfully yours,
"FELICIA HEMANS."

"I must not forget to thank you for that pretty and *joyous* song; it was just the autograph I should have desired for my friend. I hope you will sometimes let me hear from you.—You will confer a great pleasure, whenever you may be inclined to write."

The song in question,—"And art thou come back safe again," was afterwards printed in the fifth volume of "Our Village." The note which there accompanies it, gave Mrs. Hemans a degree of pleasure, "which nothing of mere compliment could have inspired her with. She had always," continues her sister, to whom I am indebted for this notice, "the most appreciating admiration of Miss Mitford's style of writing—her beautiful pictures of rural life, and fine old English feelings; and latterly, when through the silence and darkness of her sick room, her own love of nature, more intense than ever, "haunted her like a passion," she used to tell me how often some of the sweet scenes of "Our Village," rose in visions before her. It had been one of her plans, too, to write a little volume of prose sketches, chiefly consisting of recollections of her childhood, and descriptions of scenes that had struck her in after-life, and this volume she meant to dedicate to Miss Mitford."

"St. Asaph, March 23d, 1828.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"I ought long since to have thanked you for your very kind letter, although it brought disappointment with it, in the conviction that I must not hope to see you here. You are happy in having such reasons to assign, for the difficulty of your leaving home; every day impresses more forcibly on my mind the truth and the full meaning of Gray's remark, '*We can have but one mother;*' it is now about a year since I have been de-

prived of mine, and will you think me weak when I tell you that I shed tears over your letter, from the idea of the pleasure it would have given her? I am sure that you will agree with me, that fame can only afford *reflected* delight to a woman. Do you know that I often think of you, and the happiness you must feel in being able to run to your father and mother, with all the praises you receive. For me that joy is past; but I will not write in sadness to her whose writings have often thrown sunshine over my own variable spirits. How are all my old friends of 'Our Village,' Lizzy and Lucy and May, and the pleasant people at the 'Vicarage,' and the merry men of the cricket-ground? do tell me something of them all. I became acquainted with your delightful bird-catcher last month, and have only to hope that you were not the worse for that fog in which you encountered him, and the very *description* of which almost took my hair out of curl whilst reading it. Your autograph, which I transmitted to my American friends, was very gratefully received,—and is enshrined in a book amidst I know not how many other 'bright names;' for aught I know, Washington himself may be there, side by side with you; and not improbably *is*, for they are going to send me an original letter of his, which I shall prize much. If you are likely soon to pay one of your flying visits to London, I should very much like you to see my portrait, for which I sat a few months since; I am sure you will understand *why* I wish you to see it; it would be giving me something of a personal introduction to one whom I esteem so highly. The picture is at the rooms of the artist, Mr. West, 63 Margaret street, Cavendish Square: it is considered a very striking likeness. I am about to publish a little volume, called 'Records of Woman,' of which I shall beg your acceptance: I have put my heart and individual feelings into it more than any thing else I have written, but, whether it will interest my friends more for this reason, remains to be seen. May I offer my kindest respects to your father and mother, and beg you to believe me, dear Miss Mitford,

"Very faithfully yours,

"Felicia Hemans."

"Rhyllon, May 12, 1828.

"My dear Mrs. Howitt,

"It will, I assure you, give me very cordial pleasure to see you here, and for more, I hope, than one day, if convenient

to yourself. I am about to leave home for a short time, but shall be back the first week in June, any time after which that may suit yourself, your visit will be most acceptable to me. You will, I imagine, be accompanied by your husband, to whom pray offer my kind regards and assurance of friendly welcome.

"I can feel deeply for the sorrow you communicate to me; it is one which heaven has yet graciously spared me; but the imagination within us is a fearful and mysterious power, and has often brought all the sufferings of that particular bereavement before one, with a vividness from which I have shrunk almost in foreboding terror. And I have felt, too, (though not through the breaking of *that* tie,) those sick and weary yearnings for the dead, that feverish *thirst* for the sound of a departed voice or step, in which the heart seems to die away, and literally to become '*a fountain of tears.*' Who can sound its depths? One alone, and may He comfort you!

"When you write to Mr. Bernard Barton, with whom most probably you are in frequent communication, will you mention, with my kind regards, that many months of languishing health have caused the interruption in my correspondence with him, but that I am now reviving, and hope shortly to resume it. I sent a copy of your delightful little volume, 'The Desolation of Eyam,' a short time since, to some very intelligent friends whom I am fortunate enough to possess in America; they will, I know, be able to appreciate all its feeling and beauty. With unfeigned satisfaction in the prospect of so soon making your acquaintance, believe me to be,

Very faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

But of all Mrs. Hemans' literary friends, one must be singled out for especial mention: both for the warm and energetic heartiness of regard displayed by her in a long and unbroken intimacy, and because her brilliant talents and high worth have passed away without receiving the honor or exciting the regret which they deserve. This was Miss Jewsbury, of whose life and writings a passing notice cannot be unwelcome.

The events of the former were not many, nor of any extraordinary importance. It is enough to say, that she was a native of Warwickshire; that, during her youth, her family removed to Manchester, in which town she continued to reside till her marriage with the Reverend William Fletcher.

She accompanied this gentleman to India, where he had received an appointment, and within a few months after landing there, died of the cholera on the way from Sholapore to Bombay, on the 3d of October, 1833, at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three years.

Few have been more strenuous in the task of mental self-cultivation than Miss Jewsbury. She too, like her friend, was early called upon to bear the burthen of capricious and uncertain health, so often the heritage of those in whom "the spirit speaks loud." And to this was added the responsibility of managing a large family, confided to her upon the death of her mother. If she cannot absolutely be said to have pursued knowledge under serious difficulties, she had at least no encouragement in her progress, save the energy of her own resolution 'to achieve distinction.' "I was nine years old," she says, in a long letter of counsel and confession lying before me, "when the ambition of writing a book, being praised publicly, and associating with authors, seized me as a vague longing. As I grew older, it took permanence and led to effort. I sat up at nights, dreamed dreams, and schemed schemes. My life after eighteen became so painfully, laboriously domestic, that it was an absolute duty to crush intellectual tastes. I not only did not know a single author, but I did not know a single person of superior mind,—I did not even know how wretchedly deficient my own cultivation was. I wrote and wrote, and wrote faster than I can now, and without a tenth part of the timidity. I was twenty-one before I gained any desire for knowledge, as the natural road to the emancipation I craved; this was consequent on forming a friendship with two individuals, not writers, but highly gifted; they suggested study to me, and by their conversation, awoke me to a sense of my own deficiency. My domestic occupations continued as laborious as ever. I could neither read nor write legitimately till the day was over. It is not needful to say how premature ambition and energy developed themselves: suffice it to say, that the path of literature was opened to me when I least expected it."

Such are her own words, and their sincerity may well be relied upon. It may be added, as a trait of character, that one of the first steps taken by her after her mind was awakened, was to write to Mr. Wordsworth, stating the strong desires which consumed her; and entreating his counsel. It is most honourable to both parties to say, that this letter led to a friendship which was only closed by her death; and the poet has

left in his last published volume a few words respecting her, almost as simple as a monumental inscription, but conveying a tribute as true as it is valuable. "Her enthusiasm," he says, "was ardent, her piety steadfast, and her great talents would have enabled her to be eminently useful in the path to which she had been called. The opinion she entertained of her own performances given to the world under her maiden name, was modest and humble, and, indeed, far below her merits, as is often the case with those who are making trial of their powers to discover what they are best fit for. In one quality—quickness in the motions of her mind—she was in the author's estimation unrivalled."

"Miss Jewsbury appeared in the world of authorship at a time, and in a manner of all others, least favorable to the permanence of a literary reputation. She was first known by her contributions to annuals and the smaller periodicals; her brightest thoughts were broken up into fragments, and many of them given to the world anonymously: but in all that she wrote may be discerned something of the unwearied study, and unflagging zeal, and unswerving principle, which raised even her most trifling efforts above the spurious tone of the light literature just then so fashionable. In her writings too, even when least carefully finished, will be found an ingenuity of illustration and a grace of language which are too often employed to conceal the absence of fixed principle, or the deficiency of observation. Her collected works are few, the earliest of them being the "Phantasmagoria," a series of light essays and tales. To this, succeeded her "Letters to the Young," which were written under the abiding influence of deep religious impressions, upon her recovery from a severe illness. These were shortly followed by the "Three Histories," the most complete of her works, though even this must be looked upon as a promise rather than a performance, and by her "Lays for Leisure Hours." But her best compositions remain unedited and neglected, some of them buried in obscure places; and a collection of her sketches and letters and critical essays, would be a valuable addition to our stores of female literature. Many of the last appeared in the Athenæum, during the years 1831 and 1832; and it is with permission that I extract from that periodical the following fragments of a letter, written shortly before Mrs. Fletcher left England, which have a melancholy interest, as completing the picture of a mind of no common order.

". . . . I can bear blame if seriously given, and accompanied by that general justice which I feel due to me; banter is that which I *cannot* bear, and the prevalence of which in passing criticism, and the dread of which in my own person, greatly contributes to my determination of letting many years elapse before I write another book."

"Unfortunately, I was twenty-one before I became a reader, and I became a writer almost as soon; it is the ruin of all young talent of the day, that reading and writing are simultaneous. We do not educate ourselves for literary enterprise. Some never awake to the consciousness of the better things neglected; and if one, like myself, is at last seized upon by a blended passion for knowledge and for truth, he has probably committed himself by a series of jejune efforts,—the standard of inferiority is erected, and the curse of mere cleverness clings to his name. I would gladly burn *almost* every thing I ever wrote, if so be that I might start now with a mind that has seen, read, thought, and suffered, something at least approaching to a preparation. Alas! Alas! we all sacrifice the palm-tree to obtain the temporary draught of wine! We slay the camel that would bear us through the desert, because we will not endure a momentary thirst.

"*I have done nothing to live*, and what I have yet done must pass away with a thousand other blossoms, the growth, the beauty, and oblivion of a day. The powers which I feel, and of which I have given promise, *may* mature, *may* stamp themselves in act, but the spirit of despondency is strong upon the future exile, and I fear they never will:

"I feel the long grass growing o'er my heart."

"My 'Three Histories,' have most of myself in them, but they are fragmentary. Public report has fastened the 'Julia,' upon me; the childhood, the opening years, and many of the after opinions are correct; but all else is fabulous.

"In the best of every thing I have done, you will find one leading idea—*death:* all thoughts, all images, all contrast of thoughts and images, are derived from living much in the valley of that shadow; from having *learned* life rather in the vicissitudes of man than of woman, from the mind being *Hebraic*. My poetry, except some half-dozen pieces, may be consigned to oblivion; but in all you would find the sober hue,

which to my mind's eye, blends equally with the golden glow of sunset, and the bright green of spring, and is seen equally in the 'temple of delight' as in the tomb of decay and separation. I am melancholy by nature, cheerful by principle. . ."

Enough has been said to indicate the contrast of mind between Miss Jewsbury and her friend: their intimate communion was as honorable as it was profitable to both parties, from the affectionate terms on which it was maintained. It *must*, indeed, always be profitable for high minds, diversely gifted, to mingle. They corresponded freely on subjects of common interest: they spent many long and pleasant periods of time together, wherein Mrs. Hemans would enrich and mellow the quick and naturally somewhat harsher mind of the other, by pouring forth all those stores of imagination, which were never withheld from those who could value them,—while her guest would sometimes playfully exercise her great natural powers of reasoning which had been strengthened by the responsibilities and difficulties of her youth, to call back her fanciful friend, if she had wandered into cloud-land, too far from the homely realities of life. The distinction between the two was, in short, that the one came through Thought to Poetry, the other through Poetry to Thought.

But no more perfect illustration of the friendship between these two gifted women, could be given than is to be found in the two letters subjoined.

MRS. HEMANS TO MISS JEWSBURY.

"The inclosed lines,* an effusion of deep and sincere admiration, will give you some idea of the enjoyment, and, I hope I may say, advantage, which you have been the means of imparting, by so kindly entrusting me with your precious copy of Wordworth's Miscellaneous Poems. It has opened to me such a treasure of thought and feeling, that I shall always associate your name with some of my pleasantest recollections, as having introduced me to the knowledge of what I

* These were the stanzas addressed to the poet:

"Rhine is a strain to read among the hills," &c. &c.

So many allusions will be found in after portions of these memorials of the increasing delight and reverence with which Mrs. Hemans regarded the poetry of Wordsworth, that it is needless here to dwell further upon the subject.

can only regret should have been so long a 'Yarrow unvisited.' I would not write to you sooner, because I wished to tell you that I had really *studied* these poems, and they have been the daily food of my mind ever since I borrowed them. There is hardly any scene of a happy, though serious, domestic life, or any mood of a reflective mind, with the spirit of which some one or other of them does not beautifully harmonise. This author is the true *Poet of Home*, and of all the lofty feelings which have their root in the soil of home affections. His fine sonnets to Liberty, and indeed, all his pieces which have any reference to political interest, remind me of the spirit in which Schiller has conceived the character of William Tell, a calm, single hearted herdsman of the hills, breaking forth into fiery and indignant eloquence, when the sanctity of his hearth is invaded. Then, what power Wordsworth condenses into single lines, like Lord Byron's 'curdling a long life into one hour.'

> The still sad music of humanity.—
> The river glideth at his own sweet will.—
> Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods.—

And a thousand others, which we must some time, (and I hope not a very distant one,) talk over together. Many of these lines quite haunt me, and I have a strange feeling, as if I must have known them in my childhood, they come over me so like old melodies. I can hardly speak of *favorites* among so many things that delight me, but I think 'The Narrow Glen,' the lines on 'Corra Linn,' the 'Song for the Feast of Brougham Castle,' 'Yarro visited,' and 'The Cuckoo,' are among those which take hold of imagination the soonest, and recur most frequently to memory. * * I know not how I can have so long omitted to mention the 'Ecclesiastical Sketches,' which I have read, and do constantly read with deep interest. Their beauty grows upon you and developes as you study it, like that of the old pictures by the Italian masters. My sister, who shares the feelings with which I write, desires I will not fail to ask if you can throw any light for us on the piece of 'The Danish Boy.' Its poetry is beautiful, but the subject requires explanation: does it refer to any wild mountain legend of the 'Land of Lakes?' I had many more things to say respecting all that I have thought and felt during the perusal of these works, but my interruptions, consisting of morning visits from the Bishop down

to the tailor of the diocese, (which latter guest, to the mother of five boys, is by no means an unimportant one,) have been incessant, to say nothing of the boys themselves. My mother being unwell, and my sister engaged, all the duties of politeness have devolved upon me for the day. I must, in a future letter, name to you, according to your wish, a few books, the perusal of which may be advantageous to you, though I can sincerely say that I should be far from discovering the deficiencies which you imagine yourself, from any thing I have seen in your writings. I cannot help, however, mentioning, as works from which I have derived much clear and general information, those of Sismondi; in particular his 'Literature du Midi,' and 'Republiques Italiennes,' but you are probably acquainted with both. I regret that I should have been obliged to answer your interesting letter in so hurried, and, I fear, incoherent a manner, and hope it will not prevent your writing to me again, and believe me with unfeigned esteem, my dear Miss Jewsbury,

"Your sincere friend,
"F. HEMANS."

It will be seen that the preceding letter was written at a very early period of the acquaintance. A long space intervenes between its date and that of the following, which has been selected from among a large number of letters, as being one of those most characteristic of the writer. It was addressed to Mrs. Hemans on the occasion of her leaving Wales—a step she was induced to take by the breaking up of her establishment on her sister's marriage, and her brother's removal into Ireland. Miss Jewsbury had paid her a long visit in the course of the summer; and had only recently returned home.

"My dear Mrs. Hemans,

"I fear I am what your sister would call morbidly disposed, for I do not cordially settle to any thing that has not reference to *you!* But, of course, you will not quarrel with me on this account; and so, if I write you extravagant and extravagantly long letters, you will judge them and their writer by intention and motive. And I *feel* that you are sad, and I know that you are lonely, and by the time that this reaches you,

'Wishes vain as mine may be
All that is left to comfort thee'!

"But my hopes are strong for the future. So now cheer up, madam, or rather believe that you will cheer up,—

'Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' 'At even-time there shall be light.' There was *One*, and in Him the hope of the world was created, who said in extremity of anguish, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,—emphasize that '*My*' and see what force it gives, and then as an old poet says,

'Hang all your golden hopes upon his arm.'

* * * "I thank you greatly for your last.—I thank you for not exerting yourself to be cheerful; pray always tell me the worst both as to mind and body; the sorrow of sympathy is not the sorrow that breaks the heart, but the sorrow of selfishness; and as I am greatly tempted to selfishness, do not scruple taxing my sympathy. I beg you will not answer this till you get settled in Liverpool. I shall not wait for an answer, but may probably write again soon. I shall think of you most anxiously, so that if Miss —— would be your substitute, and announce your safe-landing in a note, I should feel much relieved, and shall feel as if I knew her. For myself, I am in a state of *unrest*. I cannot settle just at present. I miss my imaginative associations, and do not, like Mr. Dangle, in the Critic, greatly like this being 'looked up to.' I don't like having to lock up my similies, to mould my opinions in a more practical form, and find my favorite books lightly esteemed. Amongst my friends I have plenty of intellect in the *raw material*, but I have got a taste for it in an imaginative state. I am not satisfied with silk in the cocoon, I must have it wrought up into Persian stuffs. And then the music! * * * * In fact I believe I am very conceited, though duly gratified by the unfeigned rejoicing manifested by numbers on account of my return. The town is *mad*, no other word will do, touching this Festival. Such displays of finery in the shops! such placards! such advertisements! such buying, selling, scheming, riding, walking, talking, debating, all on this one subject! Such a medley of building, joining buildings, making Turkish tents, and Turkish draperies, and every-land costumes—tailors and milliners, monarchs of the day—and such a medley of the Messiah, the Creation, concerts and balls;—charity the avowed, amusement the real object, and poor religion the cloak. I hear so much of devotional feelings and fancy dresses, that I cannot tell one from the other, and when I see the position of The Messiah on the placards thus,

MISCELLANEOUS CONCERT,

MESSIAH,

FANCY DRESS BALL,

I always think of the two malefactors! I shall leave the town in the course of the week, and only entreat that I may hear *nothing* on the subject,—neither the feud for, nor the feud against, nor the feud neutral! In all my reading I now associate you. I think would you enjoy this or that—and so I keep a habit I do not wish to lose—the habit of looking for beauty. I met with an anecdote the other day that made me think of you. It was the death of a little, and a pious child in India, of the hydrophobia: a death one would think subversive of every thing pleasing. In one of the intervals when he was free from the spasms, he called to his mother for some flowers—she gave him some—but separating his favorite from all the others, he said, 'I only want the rose, mamma.' * * * * * I would I could shake myself free from my associations, I should be happier—at present it is an effort of principle to be cheerful. I pine after the flowers, and that sky of earth, the green meadow-land, and your sister's music and your imagination. The sun seems shining to waste, when he only shines upon streets of houses and bustle. This *is* morbid, but I do pine on my sofa here."

* * * * * * * * *

CHAPTER V.

Personal recollections of Mrs. Hemans—Her appearance described—Familiar correspondence—"A Thought of the Rose"—Retzsch's Outlines—Ghost Stories—Mozart and Rossini—Montgomery—Her departure from Wales.

I HAVE now reached the period when my own personal acquaintance with Mrs. Hemans commenced. During the height of the 'Annual' fever, chance had thrown the editorship of one of those gay little ephemera into the hands of a member of our family;—of course she was among the persons first applied to for countenance and co-operation. How warmly and efficiently these were given, and continued and extended to other projects and pursuits, is a thing never to be forgotten. They had a double value, too, as being granted by one so celebrated as she was, to those so obscure and inexperienced as ourselves. But this is not a subject to be dwelt upon, though its mention was indispensable to the clear understanding of the following correspondence. The exchange of a letter or two led to a personal introduction—Mrs. Hemans happening about that time to be on a visit in our neighbourhood. It is not straining the truth to say, that the friendship was made in an hour, and only closed with her life.

I may, perhaps, be forgiven for alluding to the feelings which accompanied me into the presence of almost the first distinguished literary person I had ever seen; one, too, whose writings I loved, as only the very young love the poetry which they have taken to their hearts. After-life has no such moments of mingled delight and misgiving. When I first saw Mrs. Hemans, she was slowly walking with another lady, down the avenue belonging to the house where she was upon a visit. Her face, her dress, her air, are before me, as I write, like things of yesterday. Yet though so clear in my memory now, I was then so confused, as, upon my return home, to give a most strangely incorrect account of her

appearance, and, even I believe, to fall into the ludicrous exaggeration of describing her fine auburn hair as red! In that brief interview, however, one common taste disclosed itself—a fondness, I might say, a passion for music. She spoke with enthusiasm of the many admirable descriptions of its effects to be found in the works of our great writers, themselves not remarkable for any extraordinary attachment to the art—in particular of one passage in Valerius, which I had long treasured,—that which describes the Roman soldiers at the doors of the prison where the Christian captives are confined, listening to their evening hymn, and speaking of the music "which they had heard played many a night, with hautboy and clarion and dulcimer, upon the high walls of Jerusalem, while the old city was beleagured." She repeated the rest of that fine passage. "I never heard any music like the music of the Jews;—why, when they came down to join the battle, their trumpets sounded so gloriously that we wondered how it was possible for them ever to be driven back; and then, when their gates were closed, and they sent out to beg their dead, they would play such soleman, awful notes of lamentation, that the plunderers stood still to listen, and their warriors were delivered to them with their mail as they had fallen." There is no freemasonry so intimate and immediate, I believe, as that which exists among the lovers of music; and though, when we parted, I could not tell the color of her eyes and hair, I felt that a confidence and a good understanding had arisen between us, which the discussion of no subject less fascinating could have excited.

Perhaps this is the place wherein a few words upon the delicate points of external appearance and manner may come best. It has been said that no woman can form a fair estimate of another's personal attractions; but in contradiction to this sweeping assertion, I shall draw upon a woman's work, "The Three Histories," for a description of Mrs. Hemans, which, though somewhat idealized, is as faithful to the truth as it is gracefully written.

"Egeria was totally different from any other woman I had ever seen, either in Italy or England. She did not dazzle—she subdued me. Other women might be more commanding, more versatile, more acute; but I never saw one so exquisitely feminine. She was lovely without being beautiful; her movements were features; and if a blind man had been pri-

alleged to pass his hand over the silken length of hair, that when unbraided flowed round her like a veil, he would have been justified in expecting softness and a love of softness, beauty and a perception of beauty, to be distinctive traits of her mind. Nor would he have been deceived. Her birth, her education, but, above all, the genius with which she was gifted, combined to inspire a passion for the ethereal, the tender, the imaginative, the heroic,—in one word, the beautiful. It was in her a faculty divine, and yet of daily life;—it touched all things, but, like a sunbeam, touched them with 'a golden finger.' Any thing abstract or scientific was unintelligible and distasteful to her: her knowledge was extensive and various, but true to the first principle of her nature, it was poetry that she sought in history, scenery, character, and religious belief,—poetry that guided all her studies, governed all her thoughts, colored all her conversation. —Her nature was at once simple and profound; there was no room in her mind for philosophy, or in her heart for ambition,— one was filled by imagination, the other engrossed by tenderness. Her strength and her weakness alike lay in her affections: these would sometimes make her weep at a word,—at others imbue her with courage;—so that she was alternately a 'falcon-hearted dove,' and 'a reed shaken with the wind.' Her voice was a sad, sweet melody, her spirits reminded me of an old poet's description of the orange-tree, with its

Golden lamps hid in a night of green,

or of those Spanish gardens where the pomegranate grows beside the cypress. Her gladness was like a burst of sunlight; and if in her depression she resembled night, it was night wearing her stars. I might describe, and describe for ever, but I should never succeed in portraying Egeria; she was a muse, a grace, a variable child, a dependent woman—the Italy of human beings."

The following letters and notes, addressed at this time to different members of our family circle, will require no further introduction.

"June 18th, 1828.

. . . . "I send you a few lines on a subject not very

novel certainly, but yet, I think, like all others derived from what is beautiful in nature, unexhausted. They have at least the merit of originality, as I wrote them a day or two since, and they have been only seen by a few friends.

. . . . . "I enjoyed very much my visit to the pictures this morning; there is, I think, a very deep feeling both of beauty and sorrow in the painting of O'Connor's child. I hope ere long I shall be able to send you the lines in illustration of it: but I really don't know how I shall write under my present restraint: my muse has been a free bird of wood and wild until now, and I do not think this imprisonment to a sofa will at all agree with her; you see I am providing myself with an excuse, in case the lines should prove as dull as bondage may naturally be expected to make them. . . . ."

A further and more interesting allusion to the first-mentioned poem, "A Thought of the Rose," will be found in a following letter. It was written in consequence of some one having made the observation in Mrs. Hemans' hearing, that nothing new remained to be said of the favorite flower of the poets. But the idea it contains—a yearning hope that all the beautiful things of earth do not vanish to return no more, but that they will be again presented to us in a perfected form, in a happier and unperishing state of existence—was a master-feeling in her mind, and is repeated with increased earnestness in many of her lyrics. Thus in "The song of the Rose," she asks

> Smil'st thou, gorgeous flower?—
> O within the spells
> Of thy beauty's power
> Something dimly dwells
> At variance with a world of sorrows and farewells!

And again in one of her "Scenes and Hymns of Life," the same beautiful fancy is more richly wrought out:

> God hath purified my spirit's eye,
> And in the folds of this consummate rose
> I read bright prophecies. I see not there,
> Dimly and mournfully the word "Farewell!"
> On the rich petals traced: no, in soft veins
> And characters of beauty, I can read
> *Look up, look heavenward!*"
>
> . . . . Are not these
> But germs of things unperishing, that bloom
> Beside the immortal streams? Shall I not find
> The lily of the field, the Saviour's flower,

In the serene and never meaning air,
And the clear starry light of angel eyes,
A thousand fold more glorious?—Richer far
Will not the violet's dusky purple glow,
When it hath ne'er been pressed to broken hearts
A record of lost love!

"July 5th, 1828.

"My dear Sir,

"I regretted that I was not able to answer your kind letter yesterday evening, having been during the whole day quite *hors de combat*, (a phrase which I once heard explained by a gentleman, as meaning 'a particular sort of war horse,') by the aid, however, of copious draughts of *sympathy* which were administered to me at proper intervals, I am now much revived, and quite able to enjoy that beautiful work,* with the sight of which you have favoured me. The graceful and spirited designs have so engaged my attention, that I have scarcely yet had time to look at the passages they illustrate, but I think the French appears to be a tiresome sensible sort of a translation, and not to possess any of the delightful absurdities which one generally meets with, whenever Shakspeare and that language come in contact together. Certainly I do not see here any thing to rival that 'Je n'ai pas entendu une souris trotter,' by which one of the Parisian literati so amiably rendered the 'not a mouse stirring' in Hamlet. You are, I think, quite right with regard to 'Fair Helen.'† Pray let the title be what you suggest, for it would be by no means desirable to have the memory of Thurtell or Thistlewood recalled by associations with *her*. I am not quite so sure as to the 'Home Sickness,'‡ the word seems to me so full of tenderness and simplicity. . . . . I beg my best thanks to your brother for the very beautiful air he has had the kindness to send me, which I am delighted to possess, only that it makes me long to sing again, and that is a forbidden pleasure. . . . . I was not in the least fatigued the other

* Retzsch's Outlines to Hamlet.

† Her ballad of "Fair Helen of Kirconnel;" to this she had originally given the title of "Fair Helen's last words."

‡ This was a free translation of the sweet homely German song "*Herz, mein herz.*"

evening; on the contrary, I am convinced that conversation does me good, and I think all invalids ought to be allowed discretionary power with regard to their amusements. I have been so much pleased with the remaining verses of the sweet '*Heimweh*,' that I have translated, though very inadequately (and the *best* translation always reminds me of a dried flower,) two more of them—the fifth and the seventh—which I enclose."

Retzsch and Flaxman were Mrs. Hemans' favourites among modern artists. In the Outlines to Hamlet, she was particularly struck with that stormy but admirably arranged group of the hero of that tragedy and Laertes struggling over the corpse of Ophelia—with the contrast between the beautiful and unconscious repose of the ill-starred maiden and the passion of the combatants, too frenzied even by "the holy presence of death" to be stayed.

"I send to you the lines on O'Connor's child, and shall be extremely happy, if you think they accord with the spirit of the picture. I should like them to have a motto from Campbell's poem; will you be kind enough to select one, as I have it not at present within reach, I can hardly tell why, but that painting brings to my mind the wild and sweet song of 'Thekla,' in 'Wallenstein'—'*Das Herz ist gestoeben, die welt ist leer*'—I believe it is that the same deep feeling of desolation seems to pervade both. I am so delighted when I meet with any one who knows and loves my favourite '*seelenvollen*'* German, that I could talk of it for ever I believe. That language, when I first became acquainted with it, opened to me a new world of thought and feeling, and even the music of the '*Eichenland*',† as Korner calls it, seemed to acquire a deeper tone, when I had gained a familiarity with its noble poetry." . . .

* Full of soul. † Land of Oaks.

The letters which follow were written after her return to Wales.

"I bore my return home and the subsequent excitement of seeing my family and friends, much better than I could have expected. My greatest sufferings were inflicted by an atrocious old blind fiddler, who, without the least symptom of remorse or compunctious visiting, made victims of the Tyrolese airs, until they seemed to *scream* for mercy under his ruthless touch. Pray tell your brothers I request them both to think of me with compassion. Certainly no human being is fit to be entrusted with despotic power. I consider myself a person of rather a meek and pitiful nature than otherwise, and yet I am not at all sure, that if I had been an absolute queen, I should not have ordered the monster to be thrown overboard 'full fathom five.' I am sure a 'sea change' or any kind of change, would have been most beneficial to his music at least."

"I should have written sooner to thank you for the very sweet music to which you have set my 'Rome, Rome,' but I have again been very unwell, and obliged to resign myself to a state of quiescence, which I would fain hope is at least praiseworthy, as it is certainly anything but agreeable. I am very sorry to hear that you too are so great an invalid; pray take care of yourself, or you will not be able to visit me when I return to Wavertree, and I shall be defrauded of all my promised tunes, and legends, and 'tales of horror.' I hope the ghost stories made your hair stand on end satisfactorily, and that the wind moaned in the true supernatural tone while you were reading, and that the lamp or taper (it ought to have been enshrined in a skull) threw the proper blue flickering light over the page, and gave every mysterious word a more unearthly character. I have been making research for a good Welsh ghost to introduce to your acquaintance, but have not yet met with one whom I consider sufficiently terrific. I suppose you know 'Hibbert's Theory of Apparitions;' it is a most provoking book, because the perverse author will *not* leave one in quiet possession of one's faith, and insists upon bringing those hateful engines, commonly called the 'reasoning powers,' into play against all the fabrics of imagination:

there are, however, many interesting stories in it, and by judicious management, one may contrive to escape the *moral*. You were right and I was wrong,—a great deal for a lady to admit, is it not?—about the Count Oginski; his song of the Swan, *was* a Polonoise and not a waltz, as I had imagined; and it is indeed most beautiful music with which one could fancy his spirit after death might have haunted her, 'the queenly, but too gentle for a queen.' My sister applauds to the skies your preference of Rossini to all others; for my part, I think that those who have felt and suffered much, will seek for a deeper tone in music than they can find in him;* something more spiritual and more profound, such as the soul which breathes through the strains of Mozart and Beethoven; but I speak from feeling alone, and I doubt not, most unscientifically. I have been very ungrateful in so long neglecting to thank you for the *Ave*, with which we have been very much pleased; I think it is full of expression, and conveys all that I wished and intended the words *should* convey. The coincidence between two or three bars and part of my sister's composition is very striking, but not more so, than one of thought, which occurred in a late letter of Captain Sherer to me. He is speaking of roses, and says, 'If a rose were peeping in at the window of the room wherein I was to die, I should no more imagine that I were taking leave of the exotic from Eden *for ever*, than that the spirit within me were about to be annihilated.' Is there not an idea very similar to this in those lines on the Rose which I sent for the 'Wreath?' I look forward with much pleasure, and yet some anxiety, to my return into your neighbourhood. My brother who, I hope, would have resided with me, has just obtained a military appointment in Ireland, and is, of course, gone thither. I fear I shall feel very lonely and *brotherless*, as I have always been one of a large family circle before. I could laugh—or cry—when I think of the helplessness, natural and acquired, which I have contrived to accumulate."

* There is a curious passage in Coleridge's "Table Talk," which, as corroborating this judgment, so justly expressed, I cannot but extract. "An ear for music," said he, "is a very different thing from a taste for music. I have no ear whatever; I could not sing an air to save my life; but I have the intensest delight in music, and can detect good from bad. Naldi, a good fellow, remarked to me once at a concert, that I did not seem much interested with a piece of Rossini's which had just been performed. I said it sounded to me like nonsense verses; but I could scarcely contain myself when a thing of Beethoven's followed."

"We will conclude a truce respecting Mozart and Rossini, as I see that however long the feud may be carried on, it will leave 'each of the same opinion still.' My sister desires me to tell you, that she entirely coincides with *you* on the subject; (pray admire my candour in transmitting such a message;) she further begs me to ask if you could favour her with a copy of the Preghiera in *Mose*, with which she is of course acquainted, but is not in possession of the notes. I sincerely hope you are better than when you last wrote to me. My own health is much improved, and I suffer so much more than I had expected from the parting looks of 'the old familiar faces' and scenes around me, that I almost regret my having returned to St. Asaph at all. . . . I send you a little poem which I wrote yesterday;* the subject will perhaps interest you." . . . . . .

"I was much concerned to receive so indifferent an account of your health in your last note, and sincerely hope I may find you better when I return to Liverpool, which will be about the 25th of the month. I am afraid I shall not do you much good, for I feel as the Welsh country people say in their griefs, '*very heavy*' just now. I had no idea I was growing by so many roots to this place, which—such is mortal inconsistency—I have wished to leave again and again.—I can easily conceive, and more especially at this time, how much you must feel the loss of your sister; in mine, I shall be deprived of the only real companion I have ever had:—she is to leave me on Saturday next, and I am haunted by those melancholy words of St. Leon's guest—the unhappy old man with his immortal gifts—'Alone, alone.' But this is rather dismal, and will weary you more than the Mozart controversy, which I really only gave up because I feared I had not science enough to carry me through it with a good grace; this is at least very candid on my part, as I hope you will allow. Have you composed any more music lately? and have you had any dealings with the supernatural world? I have become acquainted with a very impressive ghost, (though he only said five words,) that of Ficinus, who appeared to his friend Michael Mercato, in consequence of a mutual compact made before death. Tell me if you know him; because if not, I will do myself the pleasure of introducing you." . . . .

* "The two Voices," published among the Songs of the Affections.

". . . . . My whole life has lain within the wild circle of these wild Welsh hills, and I know nobody . . . . . A great many thanks for the German (writing) alphabet, which I shall keep as an enduring record of your kindness and patience; but I look at it with a sort of despair, for certainly such a ferocious-looking crew as these Teutonic letters I never did behold; there is something absolutely *awful* in the necromantic mazes of that indescribable H and V and W, and I cannot at all feel sure that they do not conceal spells of some sort or other, and that if I were to attempt tracing them I should not find myself all of a sudden surrounded by evil spirits, like poor Benvenuto Cellini, in the Coliseum. I begin to think that the mastery over them, must quite be above the genius of woman. I shall *attempt* it, I dare say, but I fear some signal punishment will follow my presumption."

"Rhyllon, Sept. 18, 1828.

"I had an interesting visit a few days since from the poet Montgomery, not the new aspirant to that name, but the 'real Peter Bell.' He is very pleasing in manner and countenance, notwithstanding a mass of troubled, streaming, *meteoric looking* hair, that seemed as if it had just been contending with the blasts of Snowdon, from which he had just returned, full of animation and enthusiasm. He complained much in the course of conversation, and I heartily joined with him, of the fancy which wise people have in the present times, *for setting one right;* cheating one, that is, out of all the pretty old legends and stories, in the place of which they want to establish dull facts. We mutually grumbled about Fair Rosamond, Queen Eleanor and the poisoned wound, Richard the Third and his hump-back; but agreed most resolutely that nothing *should* ever induce us to give up William Tell . . . . . ."

It was about this time that "The Farewell to Wales" was written.

"I bless thee for all the true bosoms that beat
Where'er a low hamlet smiles up to thy skies,

For thy cottage-hearths, burning the strangers to greet,
For the soul that shines forth from thy children's kind eyes."

Mrs. Hemans always spoke of this "land of her childhood, her home, and her dead," with interest and affection. When she sailed from its shore, she covered her face in her cloak, desiring her boys to tell her when the hills were out of sight, that she might then look up. She would often, too, refer to the pain she had suffered,—in addition to the sorrow of parting from her kindred and friends, for the first time, since her birth, to make actual acquaintance with the actual daily cares of life—upon taking leave of the simple und homely peasantry of the neighborhood, by whom she was beloved with that old-fashioned heartiness which yet lingers in some of the nooks and remote places of England. Many of them rushed forward to touch the posts of the gate through which the poetess had passed; and when, three years afterwards, she paid a visit to St. Asaph, came and wept over her, and entreated her to return aud make her home among them again.

CHAPTER VI.

Wavertree—Mrs. Hemans' indisposition to general society—Her house—Visitors and Albums—Extracts from familiar correspondence—"Ballads of the Cid"—"Memoirs of Prince Eugene"—Letter to Miss Mitford on the success of "Rienzi"—Letter to Mrs. Howitt.

It was in the autumn of the year 1828, that Mrs. Hemans finally established herself at Wavertree. She had chosen this pleasant village as a residence, under the idea, that its vicinity to Liverpool must ensure her the advantages of good education for her sons, and cultivated society for herself. But the event proved she was mistaken: Liverpool was then singularly deficient in good schools, and its society (as must necessarily be the case in a town so entirely commercial) too exclusively under the dominion of an aristocracy of wealth, too much broken

up by small distinctions of sect and party, to offer her much that suited her peculiar tastes. While she recognised truth in sober earnest with steadiness and warmth, she was too apt to laugh away argument with that wit,—which as has been happily said, was "poetical wit, dealing chiefly in fanciful allusion and brilliant remark,"—to be thoroughly understood, or valued by the circles to which Roscoe and Currie had formerly belonged. The less intelligent, who discovered that she did not enjoy the formalities of society, great balls, great dinners, dull public amusements, after their fashion—and there is no code so arbitrary as the statute of manners in a provincial town—who remarked a singularity or two in her dress, and were kept at a distance by allusions to motives, and feelings, and pursuits of which they knew nothing, stood aloof from her with suspicion and uneasiness.

These circumstances are not mentioned either in a spirit of reproach or of derision; they are simply brought forward to account for the retirement in which Mrs. Hemans held herself. She had never learned the feignings and *prettinèsses* of the world's manner; nor, on the other hand, did she find it agreeable always to sit upon her throne, as it were, with her book of magic upon her knee, and her wand in her outstretched arm. Her humor was sprightly and searching, as well as original: she could talk delicious nonsense, as well as inspired sense, and the utilitarian and the serious, who would fain have had a moral placarded and paraded upon every chance phrase of conversation, "wondered and went their way." At this time she was sought out in her retreat by every species of literary homage, from every corner of England and America, offers of service, letters of introduction, crowded upon her; literary engagements were pressed upon her from the divinity treatise to the fairy tale; and yet she was never so delightful, never so happy as when she could come in like an inmate to the fire-sides of the few who understood her, at times, making most pleasant merriment of the *notorieties* of her lot; at times, when loftier subjects were touched upon, rising to a lofty and glowing eloquence, which I have seldom heard reached, certainly never surpassed. "Were I called upon," says a correspondent who knew her well, "to mention what I think most individual about Mrs. Hemans, I should particularize the singular union of sweetness and impatience in her temper. She could hardly be induced to join any society not conge-

nial to herself; and it is much, and yet no more than the truth, to say, that her good-humour was unbroken, and that no sharp or scornful speech is on record against her." But her own feelings with respect to society will be better gathered from one of her notes than from any further description.

"My dear ———

"I should have acknowledged your very kind letter from Edinburgh; but, that it gave me the hope of finding you at home, on my return from Wavertree, and I was then within a few days of leaving Wales. As I am, however, disappointed in this expectation, I will no longer delay telling you with what real pleasure I look for the companionship you so kindly offer me, and how truly I join in the wishes of your family for your return. You will, I trust, come to me often, very often. I have no taste, no health for the enjoyment of extensive society. I have been all my life a creature of hearth and home, and now that the 'mother that looked on my childhood' is gone, and that my brothers and sisters are scattered far and wide, I have no wish, but to gather around the few *friends* who will love me and enter into my pursuits. I wish I could give you the least idea of what *kindness* is to me—how much more, how far dearer than *fame*,* I trust that you and I and ——— may pass many pleasant evenings together this winter at my little dwelling, which I hope to see often cheered and lit up by happy and 'familiar faces.' The limits of my frank will not allow me to write more; only I *must* offer my kind regards to the friend you mention as taking so much pleasure in my poetry."

* "Thou shalt have Fame! O mockery! give the seed
From storms a shelter—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine,
Give the parched flower a rain-drop—and the meed
Of Love's kind words to woman."
Properzia Rossi. Records of Woman.

"They crown me with a glistering crown
Borne from a deathless tree;
I hear the pealing music of renown—
O Love! forsake me not!
Mine were a lone, dark lot,
Bereft of thee!"
Genius singing to Love. National Lyrics.

The house which Mrs. Hemans occupied was too small to deserve the name—the third of a clustre or row close to a dusty road,—and yet too townish in its appearance and situation to be called a cottage. It was set in a small court, and within doors was gloomy and comfortless, for its two parlors, (one with a tiny book-room opening from it,) were hardly larger than closets; but with her harp, and her books,* and the flowers with which she loved to fill her little rooms, they presently assumed a habitable, almost an elegant appearance. Could they now talk of all that they had seen and heard, what delightful records might they give of the evenings when she gathered round her hearth those passing literary friends in whose society she found such genuine enjoyment! Among these I must mention Miss Jewsbury, Mary Howitt, Dr. Bowring, and I cannot but regret, that I have no specific memorials of the conversation so varied, so sparkling, so suggestive, which was struck out in this encounter of minds of no common order.

These, however, were holiday treats: her daily fare was less palatable and welcome. The excellent inhabitants of the village in which she had taken up her residence,—staunch votaries of tea, and cards, and "sociable visiting,"—had never before numbered among their neighbours, one so distinguished and gifted as she was. Scarcely had she settled herself at Wavertree, than she was besieged by visitors to a number positively bewildering. A more heterogeneous company cannot be possibly imagined. Some came merely to stare at the strange poetess; others to pay proper neighborly morning calls, and discuss household matters. Great was their surprise at finding that she was not ready with an answer on these important topics. Others, far the most unwelcome

* "Come let me make a sunny realm around thee
Of thought and beauty. Here are books and flowers,
With spells to loose the fetter which hath bound thee,
The ravelled coil of this world's feverish hours."
Books and Flowers. National Lyrics.

The whole of this piece is exquisitely happy in its expression, and, a rare thing in one of Mrs. Hemans' poems, written at this particular time, cheerful in its close—

"—Too richly dowered, O friend! are we for sadness.
Look on an empire—mind and nature—ours!"

because the most artificial, came, bearing small cut-and-dried offerings of compliment, with such literary small-talk in their mouths as might have befitted the answers to correspondents of the Lady's Magazine, some sixty years since. All these must have had scanty satisfaction in their visits. They could only report that they had found a lady neither short nor tall, no longer youthful or beautiful in appearance, whose manners were quiet and refined, and who, strange to tell, had nothing to say of theatres, concerts, &c., &c.—nothing to quote of "the sweet new poem"—no sympathy with the card-table, and the "comfortable early party." The ladies, however, could remark, "that her room was sadly littered with books and papers, that the strings of her harp were half of them broken, and that she wore a veil upon her head like no one else." Nor did the gentlemen make much way by their Della-Cruscan admiration; when the stock of compliment was once exhausted and acknowledged, there remained nothing new to be said on either side, though there were none more frankly delighted, and few more sensible of the *genuine* pleasure she gave by her writings than Mrs. Hemans. Her works were a part of herself, herself of them; and those who enjoyed and understood one, understood and enjoyed the other, and made their way at once to the heart.

I must not forget to allude to what Charles Lamb calls the "Albumean persecution," which she was here called upon to endure. One gentleman, a total stranger to her, beset her, ere she had been three weeks a householder, with a huge virgin folio splendidly bound, which he had bought "on purpose that she might open it with one of her exquisite poems." People not only brought their own books, but likewise those of "my sister and my sister's child," all anxious to have something written on purpose for themselves. On the whole, she bore these honors meekly, and for awhile, in the natural kindliness of her heart, gave way to the current. Something, however, her sense of the whimsical would break out; sometimes it was provoked by the thoroughgoing and coarse perseverance of the intrusions against which it was difficult to guard. What could be done with persons, who would call, and call again, and yet a third time in the course of one morning, and refuse to take their final departure till they were told "when Mrs. Hemans *would be* at home?" It was on one of these occasions that she commissioned a

friend of hers in a lively note, "to procure her a dragon to be kept in her court-yard." At another time, (and that I well remember was a most flagrant case) her vexation found vent in no less cheerful a manner:—

"They had an Album with them, . . . absolutely an Album! You had scarcely left me to my fate—O how you laughed, the moment you were set free!—when the little woman with the inquisitorial eyes informed me, that the tall woman with the superior understanding—heaven save the mark!—was *ambitious* of possessing my autograph, and out leaped in lightning forth 'the Album.' A most evangelical and edifying book it is truly, so I, out of pure spleen, mean to insert in it something as strongly savoring of the Pagan miscellany as I *dare*. O the 'pleasures of Fame!' O that I were but the little girl in the top of the elm tree again!

"Your much enduring,

"F. H."

It was as much the antipathy to this common-place and intrusive curiosity, (how different from the modest and appreciating respect with which genius should be approached!) as the sympathy with pursuits, tastes, and fancies, in some measure possessed in common by both parties, that made her take refuge and find pleasure by our fireside. She had not long taken her place there, before, with a quickness and kindliness which it is impossible to remember without affectionate regret, she adapted herself, like a sister, to all the peculiar and widely differing pursuits and dispositions of the separate members of our circle. There is hardly a poem or a lyric in the two volumes which contain the fruits of this period of almost daily intercourse, whose origin I cannot trace to some conversation, to some momentary fancy, or image, which sprung up in the midst of those sparkling, sprightly evenings. In the letters which follow will be found constant allusions to the mirth of the moment which gave so happy and unexpected a relief to her more melancholy hours. Most true to her own nature, as well as beautiful in itself, is the final verse of one of her charming songs.

"There's many a heart, wild singer!
Like thy forsaken tower,
Where joy no more may linger,
Where love hath left his bower;
And there's many a spirit e'en like thee,
To mirth as lightly stirred,
Tho' it soar from ruins in its glee,
O! lonely! lonely bird!"

One night she would playfully give vent to the thousand conceits, and exuberances, and imagined despotism in which, were she a queen, she would indulge herself; filling up the offices of her court, and household, in the old euphuistic style: at another time she would come to us full of some legend or historical situation, which she had discovered in the course of her day's reading, and which she would recount and describe with a faith and earnestness peculiar to the poetical. Or she would bring the last lyric she had written,—and some were "passing strange." It was necessary for her happiness, in fact, to find those to whom she could constantly open "all that was in her heart." Of the fragments of letters which follow, all those marked with an asterisk are addressed to a correspondent of her own sex. They are given without strict regard to chronological order, to observe which, indeed, was impossible.

"My dear Sir,

"I am sure you will have pleasure in hearing, that, I did not suffer at all, '*mais tout au contraire, Sire*,' for my *escapade* last night. All the way home I was meditating most sagely upon the strange inconsistencies of human nature, and of *my own* nature more especially, that with so much of

'—the perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart,'

pressing heavily upon mine, and with uncertainty and doubts respecting my future path, enough to perplex the head of *Earl Greatheart* himself, I *could* so utterly forget this, and be for a few hours a very child again; yes, indeed, and a very foolish child. I moralized 'the matter into a thousand similies;' but, for this time I will spare you. . . M. ——— ——— has sent me to read the Baron de Stael's Letters on England: they seem to treat of the sort of matters which, in my royal days, I mean to leave with such entire confidence to my prime minister. Perhaps, therefore, he would like to look at them by way of preparation."

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* "No indeed, my dear—there is *no* enjoyment to compare with the happiness of gladdening hearth and home for others—it is woman's own true sphere; . . . . I cannot therefore

regret your usefulness, though I should rejoice if it allowed you to pay me more frequent visits . . . I am not at all well just now; I believe it is owing to the great fatigue I have had of late with my boys; and this time of the year makes one so long for the far away—do not you think so? If my sister were near me now, I should lay my head down upon her shoulder and cry 'like a tired child.' How very foolish —— would think me! and rightly too! so do not betray my weakness! . . ."

"I really am rather ashamed of you, and of myself too. How any one *can* laugh at a piece of such ineffable absurdity; and, yet I *did* laugh all the while most heartily, quarrelling with you, myself, and still more the odious writer of L. E. G., as the creature calls it. All three, I think, deserve to be set down for a whole evening to play with an ivory alphabet: the Chinese puzzles would be too highly intellectual for them. . . . I expect to be established in my new abode on Monday or Tuesday next; if you will then be kind enough to come and see me, and help me to arrange about my piano, I shall be particularly obliged, as I do not think I can bear the burden of my life without music, for more than two or three days. . . . ."

". . . . I send Herder's beautiful ballads of the 'Cid,' and I wish you may take as much pleasure as I have always done in their proud *clarion music*. I often think, what a dull, faded thing life,—such life as *we* lead in this later age,—would appear to one of those fiery knights of old. Only imagine 'my Cid,' spurring the good steed Bavieca through the streets of Liverpool! or coming to pass an evening with me at Wavertree! which, notwithstanding, I hope you and your brothers and sisters will be kind enough to do very soon. . . ."

"I have been much amused with the 'Memoirs of Prince Eugene,' which you were so kind as to lend me. Sometimes I am quite angry with him for being so happy without any domestic ties; and then again, I think that those who go

through life with the fewest affections, thus exposing the fewest vulnerable points to sorrow, ought to be, and may well be, the happiest."

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* "My dear———,

"Pray do not be alarmed at this avalanche of books. I have just received some copies of the 'Records' from my publisher, and I hope you will favor me by accepting the one I now send, as a slight token that I wish for a place among your 'forty friends, or forty thieves,' as I used to call Miss Jewsbury's host of allies. There is, I think, only one aditional piece in the volume, 'the Death-day of Korner.' The American poems which I promised to lend Mr. ———(what *would* a Spaniard think of that name?) perhaps you will be kind enough to send him, as I do not know his address. I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have not in the least suffered for my very pleasant evening at your house. I do not know when I have felt so much at home. But I saw very little of *you*, and this I the more regret, as from the highly moral tone you assumed towards the close of the evening, I am sure I must have lost a great number of improving aphorisms. As for me, I really am 'a creature not too bright or good' by any means, but a mere mortal woman, and I wish to gain wisdom much, and I want you to come and pass a day with me for this purpose. . . . That 'Muse Celeste' of Lucien's is waiting with heavenly patience for ——— to assist me in paying my further devotions to her. We have been talking much of French poetry lately, does he know, or do you, the 'dernier chant de Corinne?' I sent it marked in the third volume of the book, and you shall have the others if you wish. If the soul without the form be enough to constitute poetry, then it surely *is* poetry of the very highest order. The Swiss airs are for ——— to look over. I wish he would manage any one of them that he thinks prettiest, then I will write words for it, but alas! 'where's the voice to breathe them?' Only imagine a lady with whom I am going to pass an evening, having sent to a friend of mine to borrow my poems, previously '*pour se munir*' I suppose, for the ocasion. Mistaken woman. I shall talk to her about the last Parisian hat, and lama trimmings, and nothing else, I am resolved! I hope I shall see you here *before* the day when you are to come and 'talk of virtue,' and should be glad if

——— when he has nothing better to do, would look over the '*Gloria in excelsis*;' which has been lent to me, because I fear it is not quite correct.

"After you have taught me how to make a virtuous queen, I wish you would instruct me how to keep plants alive. I am killing an unhappy myrtle and rose, out of pure ignorance."

"I return you the Gem, my dear—with many thanks. I have rather been disappointed in its perusal, and think some of the pieces quite intolerable—only to be paralleled by the L. E. G.'s in the New Monthly. When next you come to see me, expect to find me incrusted all over with stupidity. . . I must certainly turn bird of passage again, (provided sufficient life be left in me) if the 'work-day-world' people here do not let me alone; 'I shall order my wings and be off to the west,' for there is positively no enduring it. I have been kept alive in the intervals of conjugating the verb, '*s'ennuyer*' with these 'human mortals' by a few pleasant letters. I have heard from Cyril Thornton, as I cannot help calling him, and Miss Mitford. The latter writes so unaffectedly about the success of her 'Rienzi,' and the delight it has given her father that you will be quite pleased, and almost feel as if you knew her when you read her letter. . . ."

A fuller and more direct reference to this subject will be found in the following letter:*—the genuine, womanly sympathy, uttered in every line of it, will, I am sure, be felt as it deserves.

"Nov. 10, 1828.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"Accept my late, though sincere and cordial congratula-

* I cannot but here acknowledge the more than kindness with which the letter in question, and the former ones addressed to Miss Mitford, have been placed at my disposal. Nor can I resist proving, from a passage in a delightful letter which accompanied the favor, also in which the success of Rienzi is referred to,—how just an appreciation Mrs. Hemans possessed of her friend, not merely as an authoress but likewise as a correspondent.

tions on the brilliant success of 'Rienzi,' of which I have read with unfeigned gratification.* I thought of your father and mother, and could not help imagining that your feelings must be like those of the Greek general, who declared that his greatest delight in victory arose from the thought of his parents. I have no doubt that your enjoyment of your triumph has been of a similar nature. I ought to have acknowledged long, long since, your kind present of the little volume of plays valued both for your sake and *theirs*, for they are indeed full of beauty; but, I have been a drooping creature, for months ill, and suffering much from the dispersion of a little band of brothers and sisters, among whom I had lived, and who are now all scattered, and strange as it may seem to say, I am now for the first time in my life holding the *reins of government*, independent, managing a household myself; and I never liked any thing less than '*ce triste empire de soi-meme.*' It really suits me as ill as the *southron* climate did your wild Orkney school-girls, whom perhaps you, the creator of so many fair forms and images, may have forgotten, but I have not. I have changed my residence since I last wrote to you, and my address is now at Wavertree, near Liverpool, where I shall

* "There is a fascination in the acted drama, which none but a successful author can tell; and yet it is rather the doubtful intoxication of high excitement, than a real and satisfactory pleasure. The second night of 'Rienzi' I went to see it,—not the first; and I was so entirely bewildered, dizzied by the applause, and far more flattering stopping of the audience at passages which the pit wanted to hear, that I myself who am not at all deaf in general, lost entirely the sense of hearing. I saw the people upon the stage but they might have been acting Mirandola, or Romeo and Juliet, or any other Italian story of the middle ages for aught that I heard of the words. Coming home, I never closed my eyes, and next day I was as one rising from a long fever,—weary, exhausted, sad —feeling a void, a vacuum: the hope was gone, and the triumph did not fill its place. On the contrary, I had a sense of not deserving my success, and never in my life was so thoroughly humble, as in that day of imputed extacy. This does not sound very tempting to a dramatic author; and yet there is an unspeakable fascination in it too. I met Mr. Hope about that time, and happening to sit next him at dinner, he began questioning me as to the feeling. 'Aye,' said the author of Anastasius—'it is Fame coming close to you—close enough to be clutched. I know nothing like it except the success of a great speech in Parliament, and that hardly is complete. You only sway the minds of one-half your auditors, and have, besides, too much to think of as your speech goes on, to abandon yourself entirely to feeling.'"

as the Welsh country-people say, 'take it very kind,' if you write to me; and I really cannot help venturing to hope that you *will*. I have yet only read of Rienzi, a few noble passages given by the newspapers and magazines, but in a few days I hope to be acquainted with the whole. Every woman ought to be proud of your triumph—in this age, too, when dramatic triumph seems of all others the most difficult. How are May, and Mossy, and Lucy and Jack Hatch?—No, Jack Hatch actually *died*, to the astonishment of myself and my boys, who thought, I believe, he had been 'painted for eternity,' and Mrs. Allen and the rest of the dear villagers? And your parents? I trust they are well. Your mother I believe is always an invalid, but I hope she is able fully to enjoy the success of her daughter, as only a mother *can* enjoy it. How hollow sounds the voice of fame to an orphan!* Farewell, my dear Miss Mitford—long may you have the delight of gladdening a father and mother!

"Believe me, ever faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

There was no more beautiful trait in Mrs. Hemans' character than the total absence of any thing like rivalry—of the smallest shadow of a wish to depreciate or discourage the efforts of her cotemporaries. Her judgment, indeed, was as fastidious as it was independent: she did not estimate the writings or the endowments of others according to the fashion of the day, but by the standard of

* The same idea is simply and beautifully introduced by Mrs. Hemans, in "The Charmed Picture,"—an address to the miniature of her mother.

Look on me *thus*, when hollow praise
Hath made the weary pine,
For one true tone of other days,
One glance of love like thine!

Look on me *thus*, when sudden glee,
Bears my quick heart along,
On wing that struggles to be free,
As bursts of skylark song.

In vain! in vain! . . . . .

her own wholly poetical feelings: and thus she might be sometimes too exclusive, but never voluntarily unfair, or warped by the smallnesses which creep into minds less earnest. Though so naturally rich, even to luxury, in her own imagery and forms of expression, she was wholly intolerant of all counterfeit sentiment and pretty phraseology, these she would call "*property* writing," "painted language." She was too entirely and graciously devoted to her art ever to bear a part in the antiphony of hollow compliment. One of her favorite quotations was the satire on the Lichfield coterie, which she would repeat with exquisite humor,

"Tuneful poet! England's glory,
Mr. Hayley—that is you,"
"Ma'am, *you* carry all before you,
Trust me, Lichfield swan, you do!"

But in proportion as her taste was difficult and peculiar, so were her preferences strong and lasting. "If she could see no fault in her friends," she would playfully and ingeniously argue, "they were very few in number; and she was sure that she could not have adopted them so entirely as a part of herself without good and convincing cause." The pleasure she took in the writings of many of her own sex—among whom I may mention Miss Baillie, Miss Bowles, Mrs. Shelley—was thorough-going and sincere: and this chapter cannot be better closed than by a letter addressed to another of her contemporaries,—though widely differing from herself in the character and sources of her inspiration—no less nobly and sincerely a poetess.

"Wavertee, Dec. 11, 1828.

"My dear Mrs. Howitt,

"You will not, I trust, have thought me very ungrateful for your delightful letter, though it has been left so long unanswered. I am sure I shall give your heart greater pleasure by writing, *now*, than I could have done by an immediate reply; for I had suffered so deeply, so much more than I had imagined possible, from leaving Wales,—and many kind and 'old familiar faces there,'—as well as from the breaking up of my family on the occasion of my sister's marriage, that my spirits

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On wing that struggle to be free,
As bursts of skylark song.
In vain! in vain!

were, long after my arrival here, overshadowed by constant depressions. My health also had been much affected by mental struggles, and I thought within myself, "I will not write what I know would only sadden so kind a heart; I will wait till the sunshine breaks in." And now, I *can* tell you that it begins to dawn, for my health and spirits are decidedly improving, and I am reconciling myself to many things in my changed situation, which at first pressed upon my heart with all the weight of a Switzer's home-sickness. Among these is *the want of hills*. O this waveless horizon!—how it wearies the eye accustomed to the sweeping outline of mountain scenery! I would wish that there were at least woodlands like those so delightfully pictured in your husband's 'Chapter on Woods,' to supply their place; but it is a dull, *uninventive* nature all around here, though *there* must be somewhere little fairy nooks, which I hope by degrees to discover. I must recur to the before-mentioned 'chapter,' it delighted me so particularly by the freshness of its spirit, deep feeling, and minute observation of nature; 'the fading of the leaf, which ought rather to be called the *kindling* of the leaf,' how truly and how poetically was that said! That I might become better acquainted with his writings, I have lately borrowed some volumes of 'Time's Telescope,' in which I believed I could not fail to discover the same characteristics; and I anticipate much enjoyment from the 'Book of the Seasons,' which, I am sure, will be a rich treasury of natural imagery and pure feeling. I hear with great pleasure, my dear friend, that the place of your lost one is to be supplied, 'the hollow of his absence' filled up. All the kindly wishes of a woman's and a mother's heart attend you on the occasion! I shall wish much to hear of your safety and well-doing: perhaps Mr. Howitt will send a line under cover to the Bishop of St. Asaph, (who is now from home on different visits, or I should have procured a frank for this,) to inform me of yourself and your babe. I trust your dear little girl is well: has she quite forgotten 'Felicia Hemans?' I should like very much to send you the new edition of the 'Forest Sanctuary;' how can my bookseller have it conveyed best? I cannot tell you with how much pleasure I read your praises in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ:* they were bestowed, too, in language so delicate and appropriate, that I think you must have felt gratified, especially as you have *one to gratify*

by your success. The pleasure of fame to woman must ever be reflected, such at least is my feeling of it. I faithfully transmitted your message to Miss Jewsbury, and can assure you that the cordial esteem with which she speaks and thinks of you, is fully adequate to the feelings you entertain for *her*. I have written a good deal since I established myself here, and I do not think you will yet perceive any change in the character of my poetry. Miss —— desires her kindest love to you, and bids me say she was utterly *shocked* by my delinquency when she found I had never written to thank you in her name as well as my own, for the two beautiful little poems you left as autographs. Now God bless you, and believe me to be

"Ever affectionately yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

CHAPTER VII.

Familiar correspondence continued—Prince de Lardaria—"Heaven and Earth"—Mrs. Hemans' personal carelessness—Ode to Music—Circus—Household cares—The word 'Barb'—Imitations of our English classics—Irish music—Hottentot poetry.

THE present chapter, and part of the following one will be devoted to such fragments of notes and letters as illustrate that buoyancy of temperament and quaintness of expression which have been already described as so decidedly characteristic of Mrs. Hemans. I should be unfaithful to the truth were I, in attempting a picture of her mind, wholly to withhold all memorials of its gayer moods. It is needless to say that she *could* write nothing unkind or sarcastic; and that all her pleasantries, whether published or withheld, are but evidences of the same disposition as made her relish without reserve, a parody upon one of her own poems. There was something of the Beatrice about her to the last; she loved the fence

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of words: she was keenly alive to humor when untinged by coarseness, which she repelled with as natural an antipathy, as Lord Herbert of Cherbury's to the dust or soil which less finely-moulded mortals contract. Few could have surpassed her in the employment of subtle and varied *badinage* had she chosen to commit to paper the conceits and fantasies which gave such a charm to her conversation. These (to follow a metaphor of Beranger's, who, in describing the extravagances of some young French writer, happily calls them "the scoriæ," indicating the vein of precious metal beneath) were the bubbles sparkling in the sunshine, of a fountain whose waters were as deep as they were transparent;—to conceive the true grotesque, indeed, without trenching upon the farcical, the mind must have a power over the springs of tears, as well as of laughter. But the world in its short-sightedness too often refuses to acknowledge the existence of this twofold possession, particularly in a woman; and Mrs. Hemans was wisely unwilling to risk the chance of being confounded with the heartless and satirical, whose laughter comes of disappointment and bitterness, not elasticity of temper: for a similar cause, she rarely gave her spirits way in general society. And yet few who have possessed such power to laugh, have ever received greater provocation "to make laugh." The frequent and unwelcome invasions of her privacy, to which allusion has been made, were often as comical as they were annoying. The hyperbolical compliments which were paid to her must have raised a smile on a Fakir's face. I have heard her requested to read aloud, that the visitor "might carry away an impression of the sweetness of her tones." I have been present when another eccentric guest, upon her characterising some favorite poem as happily as was her wont, clapped her hands as at a theatre, and exclaimed, "O Mrs. Hemans! *do* say that again, that I may put it down and remember it!" The subjects suggested to her as themes for her poems were motley enough to help out the contriver of a pantomine. What wonder, then, that when she could no longer keep aloof from those who could not understand her, she would vent her weariness in some whimsical complaint, or epithet, or *soubriquet?* It must be recorded, however, and insisted upon, that in no case whatsoever did she ever wield the bright and searching weapon she possessed, against those who had injured or neglected her.

*. . . . "Do you not think that the name on this card, my dear ——, will be a delightful title to introduce into our court?—Prince de Lardaria? I think I shall bestow it on my *chef de cuisine*. I have been in the most *mobile* of humors the whole of this day, half laughing, half crying, over volumes of old letters which I found it necessary to destroy: you would have said there *was* an anticipation of royalty in the sovereign indifference with which the communication of various 'persons of distinction' were tossed about—but, alas! deeper feelings than these will arise as the 'dim procession' of

The cold, the faithless, and the dead,

seems to pass before me, called up by the sight of their once dear names and hands.

"The enclosed, however, which, for its delightful absurdites, was rescued from the pyre, I think will excite only mirthful sensations: pray read it! I should be loth to admit any thing contrary to the *esprit de corps* which animates our whole sex; but one *must* confess that 'sweet Mrs. ——' *could*, *would*, or *should* have been so described by a lady. . . . . I wish you would read it to Mr. ——, and say that I think of going to the Fancy Ball in that dress, and I wish he would attend me in a costume suitable to the dignity of the Earl Greatheart.

"Ever your affectionate
"F. H."

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*. . . . . "I must tell you of a most delightful dilemma into which an unhappy gentleman fell, who handed Miss —— and myself into our carriage at night, and meant to bestow some *fleurette* of gallantry upon *one* of the two, it would be highly unbecoming to decide *which*. After seeing us safely deposited, 'Well,' said the cavalier, 'there you are, *Heaven and Earth, side by side!*' 'Truly,' replied she, in rather a piqued tone, '*I*, at least, ought to be much flattered.' 'Hush! let him be tormented a little,' I whispered to her,—then turning to the disconcerted beau,—'Really, Mr. ——, I can have no sort of objection to your complimenting Miss ——, but I do not exactly see why it should be done at MY expense.' So away

we drove, before another word could be said, and I only hope he will consider himself as having *two* apologies to make, and to get 'deeper and deeper still' into the mire. I trust I shall be able to come to you on Wednesday evening, but really *le monde* is beginning to be excessively troublesome.

. . . . . .

"Ever your affectionate

"F. H."

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* "My dear ——,

"I shall retire to rest this night with more ineffable satisfaction than ever the most virtuous of queens did, from the consciousness of having fulfilled all my duties—that means, paid all my visits. 'Virtue is its own reward,' is it not? All the copy-books say so, and they must be right. Indeed the event has proved it, for, besides doing my duty, I escaped nine morning visitors, who invaded my territories during my absence, and were much more, I have no doubt, like the 'nine Miss Symmons'—(are you acquainted with those ladies?)—than the nine Muses. . . . .

"I return Miss Mitford. Your brother —— was so kind as to say he could lend me the second volume of the 'Fairy Legends,' for which I have a most child-like taste, particularly on winter evenings. . . . . Now, good night! If I do not sleep well after all my efforts of virtue to-day, I shall say that the world has had a great deal of *cant* poured out upon it these six thousand years, respecting the benefits of an approving conscience.

"Believe me, affectionately yours,

"F. H."

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* "I send you the sketch of St. Asaph, my dear ——, which, such as it is, I hope will arrive uninjured. I quarrelled with it so violently when I attempted to finish it, that if it had not been *promised*, I should certainly have thrown it into the fire. From want of practice, or weakness of the hand, I found myself quite unable to make my trees to '*behave distinctly*,' as Dandie Dinmont says, and I have contrived to give my cathedral a paralytic stroke, which has made one side shrink in wofully. Here it is, however, with all its imperfections

on its head. I am sure you will be glad to hear that, although still very languid, I have not had any relapse, in spite of my incorrigible perverseness with regard to sage advice. I shall just give you a sketch of the attacks and defence, after which I dare say you will give me up for lost. One advises; 'My *dear* Mrs. Hemans, you *really* go out much too lightly clad; indeed you *ought* to have a cloak lined with fur.' 'So I had once,' answer I, 'and a goodly thing it was, and a very great accession of dignity it brought me; only, unfortunately, I never could breathe in it, so I dismantled all the fur.' Another friend—'I *do* hope you wear a flannel wrapping-gown, when you dress in the morning, this very cold weather.' 'No, indeed; if I did I never should get dressed at all; it would tire me so much that I should never reach the last of the curls, and must receive my friends *en papillottes*.' Another—'*Indeed*, you should use comforters, it really is quite wrong in you (these last words in italics) to go out without them.' 'Comforters?—truly I need them sometimes; pray in what shpe and hue are they to appear?' 'Oh! they are woollen envelopes for the wrists and throat, and the very best things——' 'Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,' exclaim I; 'tell me no more of comforters!' But then comes the greatest barbarism of all:—'If I *could* but persuade you to wear, what I know many ladies do,' (now, my dear, can you believe such a libel?) 'a delicate piece of hareskin next your chest.' 'And why not 'hang a calf-skin on my recreant limbs' at once?' I reply:—'A hareskin to be treasured in one's bosom!—a hareskin amulet!—what *will* the march of intellect come to next?' Pray do not consider any of these observations as at all personal; *you* really make your advances in so winning and insinuating a manner, that it is quite a pleasure to have a fencing-match with you; but, in general, when ladies make their appearance in my room, I 'screw my courage to the sticking-place,' and prepare for an affair *a l'outrance*. Whenever my death, from neglect of fur cloaks and flannel wrapping-gowns, comforters and hareskins, does really take place, as the fulfilment of a thousand and one prophecies, I have the pleasure of thinking that it must be a matter of general satisfaction. All the comments on the occasion will, I have no doubt, close like the celebrated story of Tommy and Harry, (which I earnestly hope you remember,) in the spelling book of old, '*Don't care* always come to an evil end.' What a quantity

of nonsese I have bestowed upon you! I can only hope it may do you good, properly 'exhibited,' as the doctors say, it is something serviceable; for my own part, very often if I laugh it is that I may not weep. However, notwithstanding my April moods, believe me,

"Ever very affectionately yours,

"F. H."

"To Mr. L——

"My dear Sir, L*

"I fear I shall not have any evening, that I can quite call my own, until Friday or Saturday of next week, on either of which it will give me great pleasure to receive you. . . I think I shall not ask any 'human mortals,' as Titania calls them, to meet you, unless you *particularly* wish for the society of ——— who so edified us in the concert-room. Pray do not betray me, but I really have been haunted ever since that awful hour, by a portentous vision of two grey eyes, transfixing my very soul, with a fiery glance that looks as if it said, 'Write an ode to music: you *must* write an ode to music?' No wonder that such a bold and original suggestion should take a strong hold of the imagination. I am under a humiliating impression of having actually composed in my sleep, during the influence of this deadly spell, four lines, beginning 'Enchanting nymph,' but of the remainder, *non mi ricordo*. Can you recollect how Benvenuto Cellini freed himself from the evil spirits that beset him in the Coliseum? I think it was by some kind of fumigation; fain would I discover some magic herb to lay the apparition of ——. I have an ominous feeling, too, that we are destined to meet again, and that 'the words of fear,' will again be solemnly uttered—if so, I am sure they will drive me to some deed worthy of the Tragic Muse herself. My boys will leave Madam Albrizzi's works for you. I think they will interest you, though *La Signora Madre* is occasionally rather too declamatory. I hope you will be good enough to inquire about Ducrow and his Venetian per-

* The above letter was addressed to a gentleman whose powers of amateurship were never more happily displayed than in the spirited and pathetic music to which he has united many exquisite songs, some written purposely for him. It will be seen in a further portion of these memorials how largely I am indebted to his kindness.

formances; and to remember the music of Haydn, with which you kindly promised to make me acquainted. But, above all, *do* arrange in your own mind *the* Ode to Music. I am sure you will have an especial inspiration for the purpose, and in the hope of something, which will most happily blend the *affetuoso* with the *maestoso*,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"F. H."

The next fragment refers to the visit paid to the Astley's, at Liverpool, alluded to in the last.

"O! the horrors of the Circus!—the orange-peel—the cigar smoke, the shouts, screams, hisses, and other playful eccentricities of the pensive public! We sat, *two* of the party at least, with a superb disgust enthroned on our regal brows, and looking most resolutely away *from* the stage. But, now I bethink myself, Cousin, there was a certain tranquil assumption of superiority in your talking of sitting at home quietly, (and *elegantly* doubtless,) which is not to be countenanced.—*Thou, Brutus!* After all the *Rontim Bontims*,* &c. &c. &c. You will please to consider all the above as mere mystification. The evening was delightful—the Clown altogether 'a creature of the elements,'—the public might have been an audience of 'gentle readers.' I was enchanted, and my attendant cavalier in a state of beatitude.

"Ever yours, &c., &c.,

"F. H."

"I am very glad you are returned, my dear ———; I have been wishing for you exceedingly . . . I am receiving the strangest letters every day;—do read the enclosed elegant production, and exercise your woman's wit, in discovering whether it comes from Mr., Mrs., or Miss, or any of the *Principesse Perkins*. Not that I think it needs an answer,

* This note was written soon after the publication of Dr. Bowring's "Specimens of Magyar Poetry"—some of these had amused Mrs. Hemans much, as well as excited her curiosity. In particular, she caught up a dancing song: the first words of this are "*Rontim bontim;*" they are followed by others equally euphonious: hence came her designation of balls.

I meant it 'to have gone down full fathom five.' This morning I was addressed as '*Very* dear Madam,' which certainly has an awful sound with it. I am quite pleased to have some roses in blow which I planted myself in spring; I have destined them for you, but fear the boys will not carry them delicately enough, so I shall keep them till you come . . . . . I had a great deal more to say to you, but this being the first, or last of the month, I scarcely know which, there is a frightful array of *bills* just brought in and showering upon me,

'As if they said, our sole design is
To suffocate your Royal Highness.'

"So I must proceed forthwith to the study of *Lord Bacon*. Tea, coffee, sugar, almonds, raisins, those are all very endurable words—'*very pretty names*,' as one of Mrs. Barbauld's tales says of 'William, George, and Harry;'—but *butcher's meat!* 'O! that the too, too solid flesh would melt?'"

"My dear ———,

"Notwithstanding your rejection of the Clan-Campbell cloak, I trust you reached home the other night without any penalty for your imprudence. For my own part, I hope I shall soon be well enough to pay you a visit. I really mean to try if I can take a little more care of myself, (though I *do* think it requires a natural genius for it,) because having no kind brother to nurse me, I have made the brilliant discovery that there is no pleasure at all in being ill alone; indeed it is very desolate; to me so *strangely* desolate, that 'sorrow takes new sadness from surprise;' but I will not speak about such things. I send you an American Annual to look at, which I received a few days ago, and in which you cannot be more surprised to see some *forgeries* of mine on the 'Use of the word Barb,' than I was to see them *there*. It quite perplexed me until I found out that a friend of mine in this neighbourhood had given Professor Norton a copy, which I had almost forgotten during his visit to Liverpool. *He* has told the story in the prettiest way for me, but to you I shall confess the whole wicked truth. It was neither more nor less than a mystification practised upon ————, who, in the innocence of his heart, called upon me two or three years ago, and asked me if I could help him to some authorities in the old

English writers, for the use of the word *Barb*, as a steed. I promised my assistance, (I believe he had a wager depending upon it,) and actually imposed upon his trusting nature all that sheet of forgeries with which 'the much-enduring man,' enchanted by his sudden acquisition of learning, went about rejoicing, (I really marvel how I had the heart!) until some one-eyed person among the blind awakened him from his state of 'ignorance' and 'bliss.'

"I have been very ill used in several ways since I saw you. Here is a great book on Phrenology, which a gentleman has just sent me and expects that I shall *read!* People really do take me for a sort of literary ogress, I think, or something like the sailor's definition of an epicure, 'a person that can eat *anything*.' To be sure I *did* very much aggravate the Phrenologist lately, by laughing at the whole *Scullery* science and its votaries, so I suppose this is his revenge. And imagine some of my American friends having actually sent me a Tract, audaciously calling itself 'A Sermon on Small Sins.' Did you ever know anything so scurrilous and personal? 'Small sins' *to me*, who am little better than a grown-up Rosamond, (Miss Edgeworth's naughty girl, you know,) who constantly lie in bed till it is too late to get up early, break my needles, (when I use any,) leave my keys among my necklaces, answer all my amusing letters first and leave the others to their fate; in short, regularly commit small sins enough every day, to roll up into one great, immense, *frightful* one at the end of it! Now have I *not* been ill, very ill used, as I said? How very well this swan-quill of mine did write yesterday, and how very badly it is writing now! I hope —— will consider the neatness of the German lines, which I beg you to give him as a proof of its excellence (now departed), after he mended it; and I shall be very much obliged if he will be kind enough to restore it again, and to make me a few more, and I want to know whether he found the Fate-Tragedy as *comfortable* as he wished."

The following are the imitations of our standard authors referred to: now, I believe, published in England for the first time.

The warrior donn'd his well worn garb,
And proudly wav'd his crest,
He mounted on his jet-black *barb*,
And put his lance in rest. *Percy's Reliques.*

Estoons the wight withouten more delay,
Spurred his brown barb and rode full swiftly on his way.

Spenser.

Hark! was it not the trumpet's voice I heard?
The soul of battle is awake within me!
The fate of ages and of empires hangs
On this dread hour. Why am I not in arms?
Bring my good lance, caparison my steed!
Base, idle grooms! are ye in league against me?
Haste with my *barb*, or by the holy saints
Ye shall not live to saddle him to-morrow!

Massinger.

No sooner had the pearl-shedding fingers of the young Aurora tremulously unlocked the oriental portals of the golden horizon, than the graceful flower of chivalry, and the bright cynosure of ladies' eyes—he of the dazzling breast-plate and swan-like plume—sprang impatiently from the couch of slumber, and eagerly mounted the noble *barb* presented to him by the Emperor of Aspramontanices.

Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

See'st thou yon chief whose presence seems to rule
The storm of battle! Lo! where'er he moves
Death follows! Carnage sits upon his crest—
Fate on his sword is throned—and his white *barb*,
As a proud courser of Apollo's chariot,
Seems breathing fire.

Potter's Æschylus.

O bonnie looked my ain true knight,
His *barb* so proudly reining,
I watched him till my tearfu' sight
Grew a'maist dim wi' straining.

Border Minstrelsy.

Why, he can heel the 'lavolt and wind a fiery *barb* as well as any gallant in Christendom. He's the very pink and mirror of accomplishment.

Shakspeare.

Fair star of beauty's heaven! to call thee mine
All other joys I joyously would yield;
My knightly crest, my bounding *barb* resign,
For the poor shepherd's crook and daisied field;

For courts or camps no wish my soul would prove,
So thou wouldst live with me, and be my love.
Earl of Surrey's Poems.

For thy dear love my weary soul hath grown
Heedless of youthful sports: I seek no more,
Or joyous dance, or music's thrilling tone,
Or joys that once could charm in minstrel lore,
Or knightly tilt where steel-clad champions meet
Borne on impetuous *barbs* to bleed at beauty's feet.
Milton's Sonnets.

As a warrior clad
In sable arms, like Chaos dull and sad,
But mounted on a *barb*, as white
As the fresh new-born light,
So the black night too soon
Came riding on the bright and silver moon,
Whose radiant, heavenly ark,
Made all the clouds beyond her influence seem,
E'en more than doubly dark,
Mourning, all widowed of her glorious beam.
Crowley.

. . . . . "I should have sent you the January number of Blackwood long since, fair *cousin*, (I mean that to be your title in future,) but by some mischance it never reached me. Poor *Ebony* has, as I lately heard in a letter from Cyril Thornton, been dangerously ill, which I suppose is the reason of this irregularity in his proceedings. I must cordially thank you, and all of you, for your very kind interest during my late illness. I am now better than I should have thought it possible to be after so much suffering, though still very disagreeably reminded of my mortality by an unconquered cough and much languor. I shall be delighted to hear the Irish air you mention: I am very fond of Irish music; there breathes through it (or perhaps I imagine all this) a mingling of exultation and despondence, 'like funeral strains with revelry,' a something unconquerable, yet mournful, which interests me deeply. But I really have nothing, and never shall, I believe, have any thing written in the *pastorale* measure your air seems to require; I must refer you to Shenstone:

'My banks they are furnished with bees,
Whose murmur invites one to sleep,'

would be the very lulling and ——ish; but if it is a deep tone of pathos you want, I suppose nothing less will satisfy you than

'I have found out a gift for my fair;'

and I should imagine a great deal of Irish energy—a *fortissimo* expression might be bestowed upon the '*barbarous deed*' with which the verse concludes. My sister has sent me a lovely little song to some very simple words of mine; I think it is more full of feeling than any thing she has ever composed. I will give you her copy as soon as I have had it transcribed into my own book. I am quite surprised at your liking the 'Storm-Painter' so much; as an expression of strong and perturbed feeling, I could not satisfy myself with it in the least; it seemed all done in pale *water-colors*." . . . .

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* . . . . "I had the great satisfaction last night of finding, in a magazine, some poetry which I think would particularly suit *the* Irish air; it is also very much in the style of 'I have found out a gift for my fair,' only more original; Cousin —— will find it in the 'Specimens of Hottentot Poetry' which I send him, and I have no doubt that *his conscience* will immediately point out the lines. If even *these* will not do, then I am afraid the unhappy air must die an old bachelor or an old maid, (I really do not know which it would be correct to say,) as it seems to possess so few facilities for being 'married to immortal verse.' . . . . Have you committed many 'small sins' since I saw you? For my part, I do hope that if the Catholics, as I once heard a Welsh countryman say, 'get to the top of us,' they will not impose a necessity of auricular confession. How should I hate, and by every means in my power, torment and mystify a confessor! Should not you?

"I must conclude as abruptly as an Irish melody, having a great many 'people' to dispose of in various ways.

"Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

CHAPTER VIII.

Familiar Correspondence continued — Grillparzer's "Sappho"—German Almanachs—Tieck and Schlegel—Proposed Translations from the German—Anatomy of Hatred—Richter—Escape from sudden death—Dobeneck—Mrs Hemans' predilections in foreign literature.

* "My dear ——,

"I hope you did not,—no, indeed, I rather hope you *did* catch a *little*, a very little cold the other evening, that I may try whether there really *is* that supreme satisfaction in saying 'I told you so,' which all sympathizing friends appear to find. Never say it was *my* fault if you are amongst 'the afflicted with the gout and rheumatism' this week; I offered you a cloak such as little Red Riding Hood herself might have envied, and you obstinately preferred that silver-paper scarf, and so now you must take the consequence. Now having given you this friendly lecture, I consider myself to have fulfilled my duty admirably, and may proceed to something else. I began life yesterday morning by issuing peremptory orders that no cloaks and pattens . . . . should be admitted on pain of death. I believe an instinctive sense of this awful mandate spread itself through the village, for nobody came: encouraged by which happy result, I mean to send forth the same manifesto every morning for a month, after which time I shall begin to consider myself safe from all people that have 'friendly ways.' . . . . . Will you tell —— I regretted, after you and he had left me the other morning, that instead of Werner's 'Luther,' which I do not think will interest him much, I had not lent him one of my greatest favourites, Grillparzer's 'Sappho;' I therefore send it him now. It is, in my opinion, full of beauty, which I am sure he will appreciate, and of truth, developing itself clearly and *sorrowfully*, (like almost all truth, I believe,) through the coloring mists of imagination. I shall be very happy to see —— on Sunday. I have been practising the necromantic German characters, and shall have a lesson to show him, for which I must bespeak all possible indulgence. Now good-bye, my dear ——; I do wish that I lived nearer to you, and then we might 'talk of virtue till the hour of bed' whenever we liked.

This very evening I am sure I could say most edifying things, which it is quite a pity should be lost to the world,

"Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

The pleasantry in the next letter refers to the strange mistake made by some of the periodicals as to the relationship of two of her friends and favorite writers.

"My dear Sir,

"It really may be considered as no small triumph to have wrung forth a letter from our 'esteemed friend,' William. I had begun to consider him as altogether an allegorical personage, a sort of John Doe or Richard Roe, with whose name Mary found it convenient to protect herself, and I have read the productions *ascribed to him* with much greater interest now that I am thoroughly satisfied of his existence. Your concession that 'every thing that whistles is a ghost,' is certainly most generous, and cannot but be infinitely gratifying to persons of tastes like mine, for whom it so greatly enlarges the bounds and population of the spiritual world. My situation here subjects me to a great deal of whistling in the course of the day, rather more than I have found quite agreeable after the stillness of my own green valley in Wales. Your suggestion, however, has opened a new field to my imagination, and I shall for the future, listen to 'Cherry Ripe' and 'I've been Roaming,' which I observe are the favorite tunes that 'carmen whistle' here, with sensations of new and indescribable awe.

"I have been much amused with the 'Minerva and Urania,' which I return with many thanks. Matthison's '*Tafeln am wege*,'* in the former are very interesting; but oh! the '*Sieben Kupfern!*'†—after looking at such engravings as those in the Souvenir, how inexpressibly comical do they appear!

"I return the Westminster Review, my dear sir, with many thanks; I gratefully acknowledge your kindness in occasionally selecting for me such things as you know will in-

* Sketches on the Road. † Seven copper plates.

terest and amuse me, because, from my great distaste for reviews in general, I should otherwise lose much that may be well worth reading. It is their perpetual bitterness, and jealousy, and strife, from which I turn with so much dislike; they remind me constantly of the line 'La haine veille et l'amitie s'endort.' How very different seem the spirit of the literary men in Germany! I am just reading a work of Tieck's, which is dedicated to Schlegel, and I am delighted with the beautiful simplicity of these words in the dedication.

"'*Es war eine schone zeit meines Lebens, als ich Dich und Deinen Biuder Friederich zuerst kennen lernte: eine noch schonere als wir und Novalis fur Kunst und Wissenschaft vereinight lebten, und uns in mannichfaltigen Bestrebungen begegneten. Jetzt hat uns das Schicksal schon seit vielen Jahren getrennt. Ich kann nur in Geist und in der Erinnerung mit dir leben.*'* Is not that union of bright minds, '*fur Kunst und Wissenschaft*,' a picture on which it is delightful to repose?

"Where is the German translation to be commenced? I fear your time is more engrossed than ever, but I hope you have not given up the idea in which we used to take so much pleasure: for my own part, I find that the more I can throw my mind into any undertaking which interests my friends, the more I make to myself a place of refuge from personal suffering.

"Ever believe me faithfully yours,

"F. H."

"I have been thinking much of the German scenes for translation, respecting which you paid me the compliment of wishing for my opinion. The interview between Philip the Second and Posa, is certainly very powerful, but to me its interest is always destroyed by a sense of utter *impossibility* which haunts me throughout. Not even Schiller's mighty spells can, I think, win the most 'unquestioning spirit' to suppose that such a voice of truth and freedom *could* have ben lifted up, and *endured*, in the presence of the cold, stern Philip the Se-

* That was a fair time of my life, when I first learned to know you and your brother Frederick,—a fairer, when we and Novalis lived united for art and knowledge, and encountered each other in many various efforts. Fate has now separated us for many years. I can now live with you in spirit and memory only.

cond—that he would even for a moment, have listened to the language thus fearlessly bursting from a noble heart. Three of the most impressive scenes towards the close of the play, might, I think, be linked together, leaving out the intervening ones, with much effect;—the one in which Carlos, standing by the body of his friend, forces his father to the contemplation of the dead: the one in which the king comes forward, with his fearful dreamy remorse, alone amidst his court,

'*Gieb diesen Todten mir heraus, &c.*'

and the subsequent interview between Philip and the grand inquisitor, in which the whole spirit of those fanatic days seem embodied.

"There is a scene in one of Oelenschlaeger's dramas,* 'Der Hirtenknabe,' (you see I am still distrustful of my power over the *cabalistic* characters to venture upon employing them,) which has always affected me strongly. It has also the recommendation of telling its own tale at once, without need of any preliminaries. An aged priest wishes by degrees, and with tenderness, to reveal to a father the death of his only child. The father represented as a bold and joyous character, full of hope, and strength, and '*Muth des Lebens*,' (courage of life,) attributes all the 'dark sayings' and mournful allusions of his visitant, to the natural despondency of age, and attempts to cheer him by descriptions of *his* bright domestic happiness. '*Starke dich*,'† he says, '*in meinen Sonnenschein!*' The very exultation of his spirit makes you tremble for him, and feel that fate is approaching: at last the old man uncovers the body of the child, and then the passionate burst of the father's grief is indeed overpowering:—then the mother enters, and even amidst all her anguish, the meekness of a more subdued and chastened being is felt and beautifully contrasted with her husband's despair. If you do not know the 'Hirtenknabe,' which has never been translated, I should have no difficulty in procuring it for you. In Goethe's 'Egmont,' the scenes in which Clarchen endeavors to rouse the spirit of the bewildered citizens, and in which Brackenburg communicates to her the preparations for Egmont's execution, seem to *stand out* from the rest in the bold relief of their power and passion; and the interview between Egmont in prison and Ferdinand, the son of his enemy, who

* The Herd boy.

† Strengthen yourself in my sunshine.

soothes even the anguish of those moments, by the free-will offering of his young heart's affection and reverence, I have always thought most deeply touching. But indeed I am speaking of things in which I am sure your judgment is far clearer than my own, and can only hope you will not allow it to be biassed contrary to your own opinions by any thing I have said.

"As to the *Anatomy of Hatred*, I quite agree with you, (as far as I can enter into the subject,) that the bitterest and most enduring animosities would be likely to spring up from the ruins of old affection, and be rendered keener by all the thoughts of 'benefits forgot.' Do you remember those fine lines of Coleridge's?

'Alas! they had been friends in youth,
But whispering tongues can poison truth,
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with what we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

"I suppose that from such agonizing strife the mind will often seek refuge—though it be the shelter of a poison-tree—in apathy and hatred, and that the last may be perhaps more attainable than the first.

"I am still enjoined close confinement to the house, and can scarcely expect either my boys or myself to make much progress towards recovery during the continuance of this intensely sharp air. As to the advice with which you conclude your letter . . . . . I feel that I am not in the least improved since the days when I used to run wild about the mountains, despite all the sage exhortations I received 'to be a good girl and keep my frock clean,' and I really do not know how to reform myself in the matter. What a volume of a letter!—I fear you will think that my pen means to journey like Ahasuerus the wandering Jew—'on—on—on'—for ever and a day:—in proof that such is *not* its murderous intention, I must beg you to believe me, dear sir,

"Ever truly yours,
"F. H."

"I owe you many thanks, my dear sir, for so kindly introducing me to all those noble thoughts of Richter's. I think the vision in the church magnificent both in purpose and conception; it is scarcely possible to stop for the con-

temptation of occasional extravagances, when borne along so rapidly and triumphantly as by 'a mighty rushing wind,' some of the detached thoughts are so exquisite. What a deep echo gives answer within the mind to the exclamation of the 'immortal old man' at the sound of music. 'Away! away! thou speakest of things which throughout my endless life I have found not, and shall not find!' All who have felt music, must, I think, at times have felt this, making its sweetness too piercing to be sustained. Now let me introduce you to a good friend of mine, Tieck's Sternbald, in whose '*Wanderungen*'* which I now send,—if you know them not already —I cannot but hope that you will take almost as much delight as I have done amidst my own free hills and streams, where his favorite book has again and again been my companion.

I have very great pleasure in thinking, that you are now reduced to skating, as the old song says, 'upon dry ground.' After such an escape as yours, how well you must understand the feeling expressed by the line which speaks of 'curdling a long life into one hour'—nay, into one moment, a lightning moment, such as I should imagine must leave its track upon the mind indelibly graven. And I too feel as if I had been within the shadow of death since I saw you—not that I believed myself to be in any danger, but I suppose it is impossible to be much alone during illness, without thinking often of all that is hidden from us by the veil of life.

"How very surprising is the *intense* life of the mind during some kinds of illness; I could not help often wondering if *any* of the thousand thoughts which swept like April lights and shadows over my spirit, would accompany me into the world that is unseen. Did you ever observe how strangely sounds and images of waters, rushing torrents, and troubled ocean-waves, are mingled with the visionary distresses of dreams and delirium? To me there is no more perfect emblem of peace than that expressed by the scriptural phrase, 'there shall be no more sea.' My fever is gone, but it has left me oppressed with such a weight of languor, and an unutterable, '*Heimweh*' which I feel as if I could never shake off; '*au reste*' I am in a most penitential condition, obliged to wear a shawl and a cap, and to hear good advice, and put on a convinced countenance; all the while thinking grievously of gypseys and Indians and all free creatures that

* "Wanderings.

live under the blue sky. I beg you will be pleased to pity me as much as possible and not to marvel at the dulness of this epistle from a person who is in little better than a chrysalis state of existence,

"And believe me,
"Very truly yours,
"F. H."

"I cannot return the notice of Richter,* which has interested me exceedingly, without thanking you, my dear sir, for your kindness. I am delighted to find that you so much enjoy those stirring songs of 'My Cid,' which, I think, carry us, more completely back to the very heart of the proud olden time—the days of the lance—than any other poetry I know. I never met with any one who thoroughly appreciated them before. I beg you will keep them, or any other of my books, as long as they can be found of the least use, and do assure you, that when any of my friends enjoy what has been a source of enjoyment to myself, I feel all the pleasure of a child who has found a companion to play with his flowers.

"Poor Grillparzer, and Klingemann, and Mulner! The crying philosopher himself, in his most lachrymose of moods, *must* have laughed had he read that review. As for Klingemann and Mulner, and their Fate-tragedies, I can see *them* 'hung in chains' without the slightest suffering, Nothing, to be sure, can be more absurd than the 'Twenty-fourth of February' and all its progeny. Only imagine if our 'Postwoman' were to be turned into a Fate-heroine! if the destinies were irresistably to impel her, on a certain day every month, to open our important dispatches, and read all the letters, and steal the books! But I cannot give up Grillparzer who seems to me to breathe as different an atmosphere from theirs as the circle of a star (though but of the one fourth or fifth magnitude) from that of a gas-lamp!

"I have lived very little in that 'world of bright fancies' of which you speak, since I had last the pleasure of seeing you. I have been administering draughts, and superintending embrocations, and I know not what, until I flatter myself that my talents for nursing have received the very highest cultivation. Now, however, I am very much enjoying myself in the society of certain 'Luft and Feuergeister,' 'Wasser and

* In an early number of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*.

Waldgeister' and 'Feen und Feld-geister,* introduced to me by the worthy Herr Dobeneck, in a book of 'Deutschen Volksglauben.'† These 'Geister' of his are, to be sure, a little wild and capricious in their modes of proceeding; but even this is a relief after the macadamized mortality with which one has to pass all the days of one's life. I like your superstition about good wishes, and am very much inclined to agree with him who says, '*Es ist alles wahr wodurch du besser wirst*;'‡ in which kindly faith,

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Ever truly yours,

"F. H."

"I will beg leave to keep the Foreign Review until next week, when, if the destinies leave the post-woman untempted, you will see it return safely."

To these may not improperly succeed a few memoranda, which will throw a further light on Mrs. Hemans' peculiar preferences in foreign literature.

"My chief intercourse with Mrs. Hemans," says the writer, to whom the second of the foregoing letters was addressed, "was in the literatures of Spain and Germany—some few works in French, the chief of which I remember to have been the *Messeniennes* of De la Vigne, I had the pleasure of making her acquainted with. Amongst the Spanish authors she admired Herrera, whose ode on the loss of Sebastian she translated, (for the Monthly Magazine, I believe,) and Luis de Leon especially—the '*Noche serena*' of the latter she justly thought one of the most exquisite lyrics ever written. The lyrics in Gil Polo's Diana, and the elegies of Garcilaro, were also great favorites with her. I remember having read to her, at her especial request, Quintana's noble 'Ode to the Sea,' the *sound* of which, in some of the finest passages, used to gratify her ear greatly. She was never tired of hearing Burger's Leonore, for the sake of its wonderful rhythm and energy—and I remember how on one very stormy dark evening, I was bid to repeat it from beginning to the end; to see how far this way of treating the supernatural equalled or surpassed in effect, the more remote terrors of the 'Ancient Mariner,'

* Spirit of air and fire, water and forests, fairies and field-spirits.

† German popular tradition.

‡ Every thing through which you are bettered is true.

which we had read the evening previously. She gave the preference in the power of producing awe to the latter; for this accorded with her peculiar turn of mind, which sought the distant and imaginative, rather than the present and material; but I well remember how she startled and shivered at the verse which describes the trampling of the spectre horse at midnight, at Leonore's solitary door, and the shrill whisper of the skeleton of the wicket. The writings of Novalis and Tieck were very dear to her; and although I do not believe she clearly understood, if indeed they are at all intelligible, the vague speculations of the former, still the high tone of contemplation, the feminine purity, the passion for nature of that young writer, allured her even where she could only follow him in a sort of twilight. One of Tieck's Art-romances 'Sternbald's Wanderings'—she especially loved, and deservedly, for with a little extravagant woe of the old German time, there is much beauty and sensibility in the book, although it deals with shadows, and the mind dreams rather than lives in it. I do not think she loved Goethe so well as Schiller; many of the great works of the former, especially the Tasso, I was the first to bring to her notice; but, *how* she admired it, her translation and review of the poem afterwards showed. Herder's unrivalled translation of the Cid romances she delighted in; and found some pleasure in the poems of A. W. Schlegel, for the sake, I am sure, of a few passages, which accorded with her prevailing views of life, Grillparzer, (especially in the Sappho,) was one of her favorites among the *minor* tragedians, and the dramas of Oehlenschluger she also loved for their pure northern chivalry, and a certain moonlight tenderness in the passions he depicts, more engaging perhaps to a female than a male reader. The Coreggio, the scene of which is laid wholly out of his northern land, was, however, her chief delight; she found, I am sure, some analogy between the picture here given of the enthusiastic but timid and sensitive painter and his wounds in fighting with rude practical natures, and what she was wont to regard as her own history. Indeed, as you well know, her delight in any book whatever depended more upon the extent to which it thus corresponded with the peculiar feelings than on its absolute excellence; for even if it were bad, she could fill up the meagreness of its outlines, did it but agree with that she loved to draw with her own many imaginations, for then the author had full credit with her. But though

this is true with respect to her reading when I knew her, it cannot have been so at an earlier period: for I have seen among her MSS., as well as constantly observed in her conversation, evidences of a much less exclusive pursuit of study and reading. I should say that her eagerness for knowledge *on all hands* must have been intense in girlhood, and how much of the stores thus acquired her excellent memory afterwards preserved for the happy and unexpected illustration of one vein of thought, you have had occasion to remark, as well as myself. You cannot insist too strongly on her possession of stores thus derived, which conversation elicited, but which made no adequate appearance in her writings."

The following fragments of correspondence being unconnected, and, as far as I can ascertain, chiefly referring to the first winter and spring spent by Mrs. Hemans in the neighborhood of Liverpool, may be here introduced. The first refers to the literary undertaking to which allusion has already been made.

"My dear Sir,

"I have at last been able to procure the 'Hirtenkuabe' for you, as I thought you might perhaps like to carry the scene further than I have done in my transcript, and at all events that the perusal of the whole must interest you. I have had a letter from ——— which *I hope* I do right in sending you to read, because I cannot but think that *his* understanding *you* in any future intercourse you may have, will be much facilitated by *your* thoroughly understanding *him*. It seems to me that 'the line' which he wishes, and expects to see, so 'clearly defined and strongly drawn,' would be most injurious to that spirit of general kindliness and brotherhood which I have always looked upon as the very essence of our religion; and I cannot but differ from him on several other points, though I must both love and respect what I *know* to be depth of feeling and earnestness of conviction.

"I have been delighted with the paper on Burns,* which you were kind enough to lend me: I think that the writer has gone further into the 'heart of the mystery' than any other, because he almost the first of all, has approached his sub-

* The admirable article by Mr. Carlyle, which appeared in the Edinburgh Review.

ject with a deep reverence for genius, but a still deeper for *truth;* all the rest have seemed only anxious to make good the attack or the defence. And there is a feeling too of 'the still sad music of humanity' throughout, which bears upon the heart a conviction full of power, that it is listening to the voice of a brother. I wonder who the writer is; he certainly gives us a great deal of what Boswell, I think, calls 'bark and steel for the mind.' I, at least, found it in several passages; but I fear that a woman's mind *never* can be able, and never was formed, to attain that power of sufficiency to itself, which seems to lie somewhere or other amongst the *rocks* of a man's."

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* "Here comes the anniversary, my dear ——, very much ashamed of itself for having been gadding so long; and here are a Spanish exercise book, and history of Spanish literature, which may perhaps assist your brother in his new studies; the former is, indeed, such a treasury of moral maxims that I think in some way or other it cannot fail to be edifying, provided he gives it proper attention; and here is 'King Ottocar,' who will, I fear, like other royal personages, be found rather dull; and here is Blackwood, not dull certainly, whatever his other crimes may be, and now I believe my catalogue *raisonnee* is finished. . . .

"I have not yet had any inspiration on the subject of '*my nephew*,' but as my eldest brother is in expectation of an heir very shortly, I doubt not that quite a new set of feelings will spring up within me on the occasion, and that I shall then be able to shoot my own soul into the body of an uncle, or rather to imagine an uncle's soul the inhabitant of mine, without any difficulty. . . . . Will you tell ——, I have a manuscript collection of Castillian ballads and Letrillas, the easiest of all Spanish poetry, which I shall be happy to lend him whenever he wishes."

In the next, frequent reference is made to an evening passed at Wavertree; when one of the guests, whose passionate admiration of Shelley embraced the extravagances as well as the beauties of that writer, volunteered to read that singular but almost *insane* poem, "Mary Anne's dream," which he went through "with voice and gesture conformable." It may be here mentioned, in passing, that Mrs. Hemans had long since been won from her early disinclination to enjoy or even admit any of Shelley's dreamy, but most inspired poems, by the elevation of thought they

display, even at their wildest, and the exquisite charms of their imagery and versification. Her mind was as certainly accessible by the former, as her fancy and her ear were open to the enchantment of the latter: one of the lyrics she loved best, was his ode to the "West wind."

"I fear you were very unwell the other evening, or did you run away so early to escape the infliction of another '*Dream?*' I was quite afraid of looking at you, lest I should have laughed. Pray let me know by *our post* this evening how you are. . . . . I send you the Moravian air, and this is the old Swedish tradition of which I was speaking to you last night when the public entered and interrupted me. There is a dark lake somewhere among the Swedish mountains, and in the lake there is an island of pines, and on the island an old castle, and there is a spirit-keeper, who lives far down in the lake, and when any evil is going to befall the inhabitants of the castle, he rises to the surface, and plays a most mournful ditty on his shadowy harp, and they know that it is a music of warning; I met with it in Olaus Magnus, such a strange wild book! Did you ever read it?

"I hope you will not fail to come when your sister visits me next week, and I will not have any one here but our own most agreeable selves.

"Ever very truly yours,
"F. H."

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* "My Dear ——,

"After you were gone, I tore the *dead* note which I had previously written you. It had quite evaporated, and I could not think of sending it. I have yet only been able to find one of the letters I mentioned to you, Dr. Channing's; but I hope the others will be forthcoming. I think there are some beautiful thoughts in this. I send 'Hope Leslie,' and the little set of poems,* which when you read, pray remember that most of them were written before I consider my mind and feelings quite to have awaken—had they slept on, perhaps it would have been happier for me. The German book is for Mr. ——. I am very much tired, very stupid, and as cross as is consistent with the *pleasure of convalescence*, so good-bye."

* Her earliest poems.

"I am sure you will be glad to hear, my dear ——, that I was not at all worse for the flight out of doors I took with you, though I have not since been able to repeat it, on account of this sharp air, which affects my breathing. I bear being long shut up in the house about as ill as a gipsy or an Arab would. Did it ever strike you how much lighter sorrows' 'pining cares' become, out in the free air, and under the blue sky, than 'beneath a smoky roof,' as the sea-kings of old used to say? For my part, I am never the least surprised to hear of people becoming fascinated with Indian life, and giving up all our boasted refinements for the range of the tameless forests. This reminds me of some American books, which I send you; one of them, 'New England's Memorial,'* I have not the slightest expectation of your reading, and merely wish to call your attention to the beautiful map at the beginning, with all those gallant ships and groups of armed men, and wolves and bears wandering about, to express, I suppose, the dangers which the pilgrim fathers so bravely encountered. The other, 'Madame Reidesel's Memoirs,' I send for Mrs. ——, whom I think it will interest; the 'heroine' goes through many trials, but sustained as she is by 'the strong affection which overcometh all things,' who can look upon her with *pity?* I wish you would fix an evening to come here with your brother. I am afraid you can hardly be spared a day yet. I believe *a moon* was the requisite you mentioned, when I last spoke of your coming; and I am sure there *is* a moon, for she looks in at my window every night, and keeps me awake with her cold bright eyes, which, I scarcely know why, always seem to speak of the past. . . . . With my kindest regards to all round your fire-side, believe me,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"F. H."

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*". . . . . I have been out to walk a little to-day, the first time after my illness; do not you think one's first interview with the sunshine, after a long separation, is,

* The quaint old book referred to, with its illustrations scarcely less graphic than the mystic and impressive figures which still keep their firm place upon a pack of cards, in spite of the modern taste for innovation, had been sent from America to Mrs. Hemans, in consequence of her spirited and high-toned ballad. "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," which, as might be expected, is a particular favorite in the United States.

(like the meetings from which one has expected much,) rather oppressive than delightful? At least, I have found it so; I did not think the sun appeared to sympathize with my languid state nearly as much as he ought to have done, and notwithstanding all his glaring in my eyes, he very thoughtlessly let the wind feel cold to me; so I came in exceedingly tired, and rather displeased with the outer world than otherwise. I return the books your brothers were so kind as to lend me, with many thanks, I should have sent back 'Yamoyden,' but my little Hal has taken a fancy to read it, therefore I will beg to keep it till next week.

"Ever affectionately yours,

"F. H."

". . . . . You paid me the compliment yesterday evening, of saying that you remembered things which I said, longer than I did myself; pray do not extend the distinction to all the personalities which I must have uttered during those few hours. I rather think I was in the most capricious of moods, and that if I could have summoned the wings I so often wish, they would have been of a thousand and one colours. The reason, I believe, was, that choosing to have a little solitude to complain of, I had not thought proper to see any one for three days, so you were the first recipient of all the strange fancies and feelings which had been floating around me during that long time. Well, I will be very good and gentle on Tuesday evening, and try to realize the title of a book once inflicted upon my juvenile days by the heads of the family, and called 'The Exemplary Matron,' a 'wearifu' woman' I then thought the good lady was, but I now believe she would be a very suitable model for me. In which good faith (I am afraid it will be truly faith, not works)

"Believe me ever yours,

"F. H."

* "My dear ——,

"I send the first volume of the 'Republiques Italiennes,' for you and my cousin ———, and also the book with the 'Dernier Chant de Corinne,' that you may compare it with the poem in the 'New Monthly;' you will see that all the beauty and loftiness of the thoughts belong to Madame de Stael. That book, in particular, towards its close, has a power over me which is quiet indescribable; some passages seem to give me back my own thoughts and feelings, my

whole inner being with a mirror, more true than ever friend could hold up.*

"I think I must have been *fey*, as the Scotch call it, last night at your house. I was in such strange wild spirits, I felt as if I could have taken wings to the stars. I believe it is an evil omen, for I have little cause to be light of heart. . . . . Adieu, my dear Spiderelle, (I think that is a most mellifluous name, it has just come upon me by sudden inspiration.)

"Believe me your affectionate,
"FELICIA."

"Will you give the note and music to my cousin, and the German book to my "Indignation?"

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*. . . . "You shall fix your own day for coming to me. . . . . I being under the ban of the medical empire, and not able to go out at all, am perfectly disengaged, and only fear that you will find me congealed into a state of utter stupidity, after conjugating the verb *s'ennuyer* so long. Those deceitful lines to Fanny! I imagined they were something very graceful and tender, until the writer broke through all the web he had woven by his provoking refrain. I send you a letter from my American friend Mr. Norton, in which I think you will be interested by some of his thoughts on a burial at sea, and by his account of Abbotsford. It seems very long since I have seen you. I am quite tired of this Wavertree, it is so far from every thing I wish. Do you know all my friends think, I have caught the hooping-cough from my boys, though I had it in a proper respectable manner at twelve years old; to be so favoured twice is certainly a distinction accorded to few; and if they are right in their conjecture, it is, I really think, the most memorable

* In Mrs. Hemans' own copy of "Corinne," the following passage was marked with particular emphasis, and the words "*C'est moi.*'

De toutes mes facultes la plus puissante est la faculte de souffrir. Je suis nee pour le bonheur, mon caractere est confiant, mon imagination est animee; mais la peine excite en moi je ne sais quelle impetuosite que peut troubler ma raison, ou me donner de la mort. Je vous le repete encore, menagez-moi; la gaiete, la mobilite ne me servent qu'en apparence: mais il y a dans mon ame des abimes de tristesse dont je ne pouvais me defendre qu'en me preservant de l'amour.

Corinne, Vol. 1st.

incident of my life. How do you bear this 'bitter sky?' It is very dismal to live in a *world without flowers*. I have not seen even a periwinkle or a Christmas rose this month. The boys are not making any progress towards recovery; indeed I scarcely expect it yet. Pray are you sensible of any improvement in my hand or style of writing? I have just had a most elegant pen presented to me, all twisted round with red silk, and bearing my name in Venetian beads, with a garniture of laurel and forget-me-not; and I really think such an implement ought to produce only '*paroles d'or et de soie.*' What a very voluminous post to-day! All human things, however, must come to an end, therefore believe me "Ever affectionately yours.

"F. H."

Wavertree, near Liverpool, April 3rd.

"My dear Miss Mitford,

"Some friends of mine, the editors of ——, are anxious to know whether you received a letter from them some time since with a sketch which they hoped you might be prevailed upon to illustrate: and I hope so too, for I am much interested in the work, from regard to the family by whom it has been undertaken; and, if I were near you, I should certainly 'coax or *'tice* you' (as an old gardener of ours used to say of me in my childhood, that 'Miss Felicia *'ticed* him to do whatever she pleased') to comply with our request. I know I wish I could 'tice you here for a little while, though 'our village' is so utterly *unrural* a scene, that I should be rather at a loss to find a pretty walk; and, certainly, of our losing ourselves in such a lovely wood as you have somewhere described, there would not be the least chance. I have had in my possession for some time a great folio sheet of enthusiasm addressed to you by a gentleman of this neighbourhood . . . . . Unfortunately, I cannot get his ecstasies (excited by the performance of Rienzi) within the limits of any frank that ever was or will be—I mean any *member's* frank. I must try my interest with the Quarter-Master-General, or the Chief Commissioners of Excise, or some other such potentate, under whose *chaperonage* you may possibly have this 'immeasurably-spread' effusion some day laid at your feet. I hope the dear papa is well, and able to attend your rambles as usual, and that your mother has not suffered from this very trying winter. Believe me,

"Ever truly yours,

"Felicia Hemans."

CHAPTER IX.

Character of the poems written by Mrs. Hemans whilst residing at Wavertree—Peninsular Melodies—Familiar correspondence—Lord Collingwood's Life and Letters—"The Song of Night"—Moore's "Lines on certain Memoirs of Lord Byron"—"Letter with a symphony"—Spanish cathedrals—Note from Seacombe—Lord Byron's hair—Remarks and illustrations.

ENOUGH has been already said and shown, to give a tolerably complete picture of the nature and manner of Mrs. Hemans' life, during the three years (far from her happiest) spent by her at Wavertree. She had only just reached the fame, which, from its novelty no less than its height, was sure to expose her to curiosity and adulation. She had never before been subjected, alone, to the cares and vexations of domestic life, the presence of which, by contrast, increased her eagerness to escape to those extreme regions of fancy and speculation, which nothing earthly or practical was permitted to enter. She had never till then been called upon to bear her part in general society; and while she felt its requisitions irksome, and its enjoyments barren of compensation for time sacrificed and self restraint enjoined, her desires of home companionship were stayed, if not satisfied, by the acquisition of a few attached friends to whom she could "show all that was in her heart." Among these, Mrs. Lawrence, of Wavertree Hall, and Miss Park, also of Wavertree, may, without any indelicacy, be particularized: of the "brightly-associated hours" she passed with the former, herself an elegant Spanish and Italian scholar, a record remains in the dedication to one of her last volumes—the "National Lyrics and Songs of Music?"—the latter lady, too, was a zealous and disinterested counsellor and comforter: it was chiefly at her instance that Mrs. Hemans made trial of the neighbourhood of Liverpool as a residence.

The state of Mrs. Hemans' mind—as yet struggling without the threshold of its last and greatest change—is, I think, to be traced in the poems written by her during these

three years, if I am not reasoning from memory rather than from inference. They are more exclusively and sadly individual (with the exception, perhaps, of the "Songs for Music") than any of her former works: they treat more undividedly of the deeper workings of a sensitive and tender, and yet high-toned spirit: they exhibit, to the utmost, its unquiet desire to penetrate the mysteries which on this side of the grave are not penetrable: they point unceasingly to the wounds which the world inflicts, rarely to those which it heals. So aware were her friends of this disposition of her mind prevailing almost to unhealthiness, that they urged her to throw herself upon some work, in the progress of which she should be obliged to forget, rather than imbody, thoughts of so melancholy a hue. They urged her in vain: she would sometimes, it is true, playfully talk of writing a fairy mask:—what a charming and fanciful poem would this have been!—or she would linger for a moment on some historical era or character, as if about to concentrate her powers round it—and again, and yet again, return to her own heart, not merely for her subjects, but also their colouring. One legend which she took up, (I believe from the German) she was compelled to abandon in consequence of the injurious influence its contemplation exercised upon a frame so fragile as hers. This was the tale of an enchantress, who, to win and secure the love of a mortal, sacrifices one of her supernatural gifts of power after another:—her wand first, then her magic girdle, then the talismanic diadem she wears,—last of all, her immortality. She is repaid by satiety—neglect—desertion.

During these three years, in proportion as Mrs. Hemans' love for, and understanding of, music increased, she indulged herself in the fascinating occupation of song-writing. Among many other sets of songs,*—some of which were set to music by her sister, the rest by different friends,—the "Peninsular Melodies" should be mentioned. The work failed, because many of the airs selected were so thoroughly *unvocal* as to render the adaptation of characteristic words impossible: some of the Zorzicos (an old Moorish melody) are as rapid and as untameable as the wildest bag-pipe tunes. The ease with which she wrote her songs amounted almost to the fluency of improvisation.

* Farther allusion to these will be found in a subsequent series of letters.

I remember being present when some words were returned to her, as being unsuitable for the particular melody to which she wished them adapted. She sat down, and in a few moments, by the insertion of as many lines as the original had at first contained, gave the verses an entirely different and very peculiar rhythm—and at once changed and completed the song without any verbiage being apparent in its language, or dislocation in its structure.

I may now proceed with the extracts from her familiar correspondence. The latest among them, it will be seen, refer to the journey into Scotland undertaken by her in the summer of the year 1829.

"My dear Sir,

"Having to send a messenger into the town, I return you, with many thanks, the tale by 'our esteemed friend,' William Howitt, which perhaps you may want. I think it possesses a good deal of originality, and I have read it with much interest. I could almost imagine he had been portraying some features of *my* early life in his heroine's, which could scarcely have been more unfettered. Is that strong passion for intellectual beauty a happy or a mournful gift, when so out of harmony with the rest of our earthly lot? Sometimes I think of it in sadness, but oftener it seems to me as a sort of rainbow, made up of light and tears, yet still the pledge of happiness to come. How very beautiful are those letters of Lord Collingwood's to his family!—more *touchingly* so, I think, than even Reginald Heber's; for there is something in all those thoughts of hearth and home, and of the garden trees, and of the 'old summer-seat,' which breathing as they do from amidst the far and lonely seas, affect us like an exile's song of his father-land. The letters to his wife brought strongly to my mind the poor Queen of Prussia's joyous exclamations in the midst of her last sufferings:—'Oh! how blessed is she who receives a letter such as this!' I am exceedingly obliged to you for making this delightful book known to me. To be sure, his lordship does seem a little 'notional,' as the Americans call it, sometimes, on the subject of female education—now does he not?—geometry and the square root—'O words of fear!'" . . . .

"My dear Sir,

"You will scarcely yet, I suppose, be collecting your materials for the ——; but as the enclosed piece has been

some time destined for your, I may as well send it now. It was suggested by a relievo of Thorwaldsen's, which represents Night hushing a babe upon her bosom.* I received a most pathetic appeal, a short time since from ——, in behalf of a young lady, a friend of his, who had taken it into her head to want some of my writing. I must transcribe some of his rhetoric for your admiration, and I am sure you will agree with me that it is enough 'to soften rocks:'—'Can you, dear madam, refuse this young, engaging girl, the daughter of ——, the pupil of ——, the friend of ——, the innocent gratification she thus timidly solicits?' No, to be sure I could not; one must have had a heart of stone to resist such moving words, so away went the autograph." . . . . .

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* The poem in question is the "Song of Night," afterwards published among the "Songs of the Affections." It is full of lofty imagery and striking contrast; and may, perhaps, be singled out as one of the best lyrics written by Mrs. Hemans about this time. A few stanzas may be cited in corroboration of this judgment.

* * * *

I come with every star;
Making thy streams, that on their noon-day track,
Give but the moss, the reed, the lily back,
Mirrors of worlds afar.

* * * *

I come with mightier things!
Who calls me silent? I have many tones—
The dark skies thrill with low mysterious moans
Borne on my sweeping wings.

* * * *

I come with all my train:
Who calls me lonely?—Hosts around me tread,
The intensely bright, the beautiful, the dead,—
Phantoms of heart and brain!

* * * *

I, that with soft control,
Shut the dim violet, hush the woodland song,
I am the avenging one! the arm'd—the strong,
The searcher of the soul!

I that shower dewy light,
Through slumbering leaves, bring storms!—the tempest birth
Of memory, thought, remorse:—Be holy, Earth!
I am the solemn Night!

"Jan. 1829.

. . . "I can well imagine the weariness and disgust with which a mind of intellectual tastes must be oppressed by the long days of 'work-day world' cares, so utterly at variance with such tastes; and yet, perhaps, the opposite extreme is scarcely more to be desired. Mine, I believe, has been *too much* a life of thought and feeling for health and peace: I *can* certainly quit this little world of my own for active duties; for however I may at times playfully advocate the cause of *weakness*, there is no one who has, with deeper need for *strength*, a fuller conviction of its necessity; but it is often by an effort, and a painful one, that I am enabled to obtain it."

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* "My dear ——,

"I ought to have acknowledged both your kind notes ere now, and thanked you for the copy of Moore's lines,* which are certainly more witty than elegant—perhaps the very coarseness from which one cannot help rather shrinking, renders the satire the more appropriate to its object. Do you remember that the other evening (which I assure you I enjoyed as much as you could have done) we were speaking of the pleasures of memory; and I thought they resembled those shadowy images of flowers which the alchymists of old believed they had the power of raising from the ashes of the plant? I send you a few lines† which that conversation suggested, and which, in consequence, will perhaps interest you. I do hope I shall be able to come to you on Saturday evening. . . . . But, generally speaking, I cannot tell you how painful going out is to me now; I know it is a weakness which I *must* conquer, but I feel so alone, so unprotected; and this weary celebrity makes such things, I believe, press the more bitterly.

"I hardly know why I should 'bestow my tediousness' upon you in this manner, only that I am just returned from a large party of strangers, in which, feeling myself more alone than *when* alone, because there was no one who inte-

* The satirical verses upon Leigh Hunt's Personal Reminiscences of Lord Byron.

† This was a lyric which appeared in one of the Annuals, beginning,

'Twas a dream of olden days
That art, with some strange power,
A visionary form could raise
From the ashes of a flower.

rested me in the least, I grew especially weary, duller than any pumpkin or 'fat weed' whatsoever, and exceedingly inclined to rush out of the room without any *conge* to host or guest. From this rash act, however, some sense of decorum restrained me, and so here I am, making amends to myself by pouring out my *ennui* upon your devoted head, which I will now spare any farther infliction, as it is growing late enough to carry one's disgusts quietly to bed. Good night, therefore, and believe me "Affectionately yours,

"F. H."

. . . "I must also thank you for the very kind note which I received by little Henry: I was much better when it arrived. . . . My complaint is indeed most pertinacious, if not hopeless, as I am assured, and indeed convinced, that it is caused by excitements, from which, unless I could win 'the wing of a dove and flee away' into a calmer atmosphere, there is no escape. I have therefore only to meet it as cheerily as I may—and there is a buoyant spirit yet unconquered, though often sorely shaken, within me.

"I trust I shall have the pleasure of seeing you here on the evening of the day which I have begged your sister to pass with me. Do you know that I have really succeeded in giving something of beauty to the *suburban* court of my dwelling by the aid of the laburnums and rhododendrons, which I planted myself, and which I want you to see while they are so amiably flowering. But how soon the feeling of *home* throws light and loveliness over the most uninteresting spot! I am beginning to draw that feeling around me here, and consequently to be happier.

"Did you ever see a letter *with a symphony?* I call the enclosed, one of that class. After many and long wanderings, it reached me this morning with that awful Titantic poem the ——, the sight of which really renews all the terrors of 'Charlemagne.' . . . . .

"May I request you to present to your sister, with all possible oracular solemnity, the accompanying inestimable collection of aphorisms, particularly recommending to her notice 'the short miscellaneous sentences alphabetically digested, and easily to be retained in the memories of youth,' with which the work closes. I shall expect her to have learned perfectly the two first pages for repetition the next time we visit the 'happy valley.' —— tells me, that you wished for the lines to the Rhine song, a copy of which I

have now the pleasure of sending you.* In explanation of their very *pugnacious* character, I must mention that they were written at the request of my eldest brother, who wished them to commemorate the battles of his young days.

"Ever truly yours, "F. H."

"I thought there was something which I wished to show you the other evening, but, as usual, I did not remember it until you were gone, and therefore send it now. It was Lockhart's description, in 'Peter's Letters,' of *our* cathedral, and also of the glorious Spanish churches, which his language arrays in such 'religious light,' that I know you will enjoy the passage with your whole heart. I also send my copy of the Iphigenia, because I shall like to know whether you are as much struck with all that I have marked in it as I have been. Do you remember all we were saying on the obscurity of *female* suffering on such stormy days of the lance and spear as the good Fray Agapida describes so vividly? Has not Goethe beautifully developed the idea in the lines which I enclose? they occur in Iphigenia's supplication to Thoas for her brother." . . . .

"Dear ——,

"I really should give you a lecture, if I did not know, from intimate conviction, how very useless a thing *wisdom* is in this world. But I wish you could keep down that feverish excitement, as it is so hurtful even to intellectual power, that I am convinced we have not more than half command even of our *imaginative* faculties whilst under its influence. I want you to fix your heart and mind steadfastly on some point of excellence, and to go on pursuing it '*soberly*,' as Lady Grace says, and satisfying yourself with the deep consciousness that you *are* making way. I know this may be, dear ——, because it was my own case, with feelings excitable as you know mine are, and amidst all things that could most try and distract them. I send you a little collection of stories which I made about two years ago, and amongst which I think you might, perhaps, find some *materiel*. . . . I almost think I would recommend the *Kunstroman*, to be deferred till you know German.

"Ever yours very sincerely, "F. H."

* The "English Soldier's Song of Memory," published among the "National Lyrics and Songs for Music."

Dated from Seacombe.*

* "I hope you have not staid in for me this morning, my dear ——, and I hope your brother did not wait long, as he had kindly promised to do, for my landing. I had fully intended to be with you a little after twelve, but neither steam-packet nor sail-boat was attainable: the whole Seacombe fleet was gone to convoy some vessels down the river. I crossed the water at last, between one and two, with some thoughts of proceeding to —— street; but the pier was crowded with shaggy *Orson-looking* men, and I, having only little Charles with me, really had not resolution to effect a landing. I must return home on Saturday, having much to arrange before my flight to Scotland, and I now write to ask if you could come over here to-morrow, should the weather be fine, and pass the day with me? There really are some pretty dells and *bournes* about here, though you would not imagine it, and I should very much enjoy a quiet walk with you, therefore if you can come, do let it be earlier than the last time. There will be an out-pouring of spirit of *Pumpkinism* upon me the moment I get back, and I shall not have half the pleasure in seeing you there amidst the interruptions we generally have; it is quite delightful to know that a river broad and deep is flowing between one's-self and the *foe*. . . . . Will you give the enclosed to —— with my kind remembrance? tell him he must not feel any 'compunctious visitings' on receiving it, because I have reserved quite as much as I shall want, for a brooch in which I mean to wear it; I do not know any one who can value it more than he will, and I have no sort of pleasure in keeping a relic all to myself.

"Were you not astonished to hear of the sudden spirit of enterprise which took possession of me when I determined to visit Chiefswood? I really begin to feel rather *Mimosa-like* when I contemplate the desperate undertaking a little more closely. How I do wish you were going with me!"

The relic in question was a small lock of Lord Byron's hair; the brooch which contained the portion reserved for herself was one of her favorite ornaments till the Memoirs of the poet appeared. An illustrative trait or two which have reference to these may be here introduced, though

* A suburban bathing-place on the Cheshire side of the Mersey.

chronologically out of place. Some idea of the extraordinary power and clearness of her memory may be conveyed by the fact, that after having heard those beautiful stanzas addressed to his sister by Lord Byron—which afterwards appeared in print—read aloud twice in manuscript, she repeated them to us, and even wrote them down with a surprising accuracy. On two lines, I recollect, she dwelt with particular emphasis,—

> "There are yet two things in my destiny,
> A world to roam o'er, and a home with thee."

Her anxiety to see the memoirs was extreme,—her disappointment at the extracts which appeared in the periodicals so great as to prevent her reading the work when published. "The book itself," says she, in one of her notes, "I do not mean to read; I feel as if it would be like entering a tavern, and I shall not cross the threshold." She found the poet whom she had long admired at a distance invested with a Mephistopheles-like character which pained and startled her; for the unworldly and imaginative life she had led, rendered her slow to admit and unwilling to tolerate the strange mixture of cruel mockery and better feeling, which breathe through so many of his letters; and the details of his continental wanderings shocked her fastidious sense as exceeding the widest limits within which one so passionate and so disdainful of law and usage might err and be forgiven. From this time forth she never wore the relic; indeed, her shrinking from any thing like coarseness of thought, or feeling, or language, (which will be traced in the following note,) may by some be thought to trench upon affectation, whereas it was only the necessary consequence of her exclusive and unchecked devotion to the beautiful. If any passage in one of her most favorite writers offended her delicacy, the leaf was torn out without remorse; and every one familiar with her little library will have been stopped by many a pause and chasm, of which this is the explanation.

* "My dear ———,

"Upon looking over the dramatic specimens which I had promised to send you, I was distressed to find the *titles* of some of the plays so very coarse, though the scenes have been carefully chosen, that I really did not like to forward you the book. If, however, you do not take alarm at 'the

word of fear,' *Lectures*, I think you will find in the accompanying volume of Hazlitt's a great deal that is interesting, and many selections from those olden poets which will give you an idea of their force and sweetness 'drawn from the well of English *undefiled*.' "

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Hemans' visit to Scotland—Her funereal poetry—Her reception in Edinburgh—Anecdotes—Letters from Chiefswood—The Rhymour's Glen—Walk with Sir Walter Scott—The Rhine Song—"Yarrow visited"—Lines to Rizzio's picture—Letter from Abbotsford—Visit of the Duc de Chartres—Anecdotes—Letters from Edinburgh—Moonlight walk—Scotch pulpit eloquence—Visit to Mackenzie—Remarkable group of sculpture—Letter from Milburn Tower.

It was early in the summer of 1829, that Mrs. Hemans urged by numerous invitations, visited Scotland, acompanied by her two youngest sons. This was the first of the only two periods, during which she was received and distinguished as a guest by those, personally strangers to her, whom the interest inspired by her works had made her friends. Mrs. Hemans' name, indeed, was singularly popular in Scotland; she had written some of her best poems for its principal literary periodical, Blackwood's Magazine; she was already regarded as a friend in more than one noble house, from having been summoned in times of affliction to perform those melancholy, but soothing offices for the dead, which survivors could only intrust to one as genuine in feeling as she was delicate in expression.*

The events and pleasures of this Scottish journey will be found pleasantly described in the following letters, which were written under the immediate impulse of the moment,

* Mrs. Hemans' funereal poems are among her most impressive works: the music of her verse, through which an under-current of sadness may always be traced, was never more happily employed than in lamenting the beloved and early called, or in bidding

"Hope to the world to look beyond the tombs."

I need only mention a few lyrics, "The Farewell to the Dead," (in the Lays of Many Lands:) "The Exile's Dirge," (in the songs of the Affections;) "The Burial of an Emigrant's Child in the Forest," (in the "Scenes and Hymns of Life;") and the "Burial

and in the artlessness of perfect confidence. An anecdote or two may be added to bear out the occasional references to the honors and humors of *lionism* which they contain. Mrs. Hemans had scarcely arrived in Edinburgh, when her name being recognised at her hotel, a plentiful bouquet of flowers was brought into her room, nor could any welcome have been devised half so acceptable as this to one who used gaily to call one of the long graceful branches of the Convallaria (Solomon's Seal) "her sceptre," and whose passion for flowers (the word is not too strong) increased with every year of her life.* She would tell too, with infinite humour, how she had been abruptly accosted in the castle garden by an unknown lady, who approached her "under the assurance of an internal sympathy that she must be Mrs. Hemans." Another, whose literary reputation was not inconsiderable, when introduced to her, fancifully asked,

in the Desert," a noble poem, published among her poetical remains. The introduction of the two following stanzas of a more concise and monumental character, though they have already appeared in print, will not I am sure, be objected to, as illustrating the above remark.

INSCRIPTION FOR A TOMB.

Earth! guard what here we lay in holiest trust;
That which hath left our home a darkened place,
Wanting the form, the smile now veiled with dust,
The light departed with our loveliest face!.
Yet from thy bonds our sorrow's hope is free,
We have but *lent* our beautiful to thee!

But thou, O Heaven! keep, keep what thou hast taken,
And with our treasure keep our hearts on high!
The spirit weak and yet by pain unshaken,
The faith, the love, the lofty constancy,
Guide us where *these* are with our sister flown,
They were of thee, and thou hast claimed thine own!

* "I really think that pure passion for flowers is the only one which long sickness leaves untouched with its chilling influences. Often during this weary illness of mine have I looked upon new books with perfect apathy, when if a friend has sent me a few flowers, my heart has leaped up to their dreamy hues and odours with a sudden sense of renovated childhood, which seems to me one of the mysteries of our being."—*Mrs. Hemans to Mrs. Lawrence from Redesdale, near Dublin*, 1835.

"whether a bat might be allowed to appear in the presence of a nightingale." An anecdote, too, has appeared in one of the Edinburgh Journals, which is worth recording. After a visit paid to Mrs. Hemans to the sanctum of a courtly bibliopole of the modern Athens, he was asked by some friend whether he had yet chanced to see the most distinguished English poetess of the day. "He made no answer," continues the narrator, "but taking me by the arm in solemn silence, led me into the back parlor, where stood a chair in the centre of the room, isolated from the rest of the furniture; and pointing to it, said, with the profoundest reverence, in a low earnest tone, 'There *she* sat, sir, on that chair.'"

After a few days' stay in Edinburgh, Mrs. Hemans proceeded to Roxburghshire, whence the following letters are dated. It is hardly necessary to say that Chiefswood, the residence of the accomplished author of Cyril Thornton, with whom she had long maintained a correspondence, is in the immediate neighbourhood of Melrose and Abbotsford.

Chiefswood, July 13.

* "How I wish you were within reach of a *post*, like our most meritorious Saturday's Messenger, my dear ———. Amidst all these new scenes and new people I want so much to talk to you all! At present I *can* only talk of Sir Walter Scott, with whom I have been just taking a long, delightful walk through the 'Rhymour's Glen.' I came home, to be sure, in rather a disastrous state after my adventure, and was greeted by my maid, with that most disconsolate visage of hers, which invariably moves my hard heart to laughter; for I had got wet above my ankles in the haunted burn, torn my gown in making my way through thickets of wild roses, stained my gloves with wood-strawberries, and even—direst misfortune of all! scratched my face with a *rowan* branch. But what of all this? Had I not been walking with Sir Walter Scott, and listening to tales of elves and bogles and brownies, and hearing him recite some of the Spanish ballads till they 'stirred the heart like the sound of a trumpet?' I must reserve many of these things to tell you when we meet, but one very *important* trait, (since it proves a sympathy between the Great Unknown and myself,) I cannot possibly defer to that period, but must record it now. You will expect something peculiarly impressive, I have no doubt. Well—we had reached a rustic seat in the wood,

and were to rest there, but I, out of pure perverseness, chose to establish myself comfortably on a grass bank. 'Would it not be more prudent for you, Mrs. Hemans,' said Sir Walter, 'to take the seat?' 'I have no doubt that it would, Sir Walter, but, somehow or other, I always prefer the grass.' 'And so do I,' replied the dear old gentleman, coming to sit there beside me, 'and I really believe that I do it chiefly out of a wicked wilfulness, because all my *good advisers* say that it will give me the rheumatism.' Now was it not delightful? I mean for the future to take exactly my own way in all matters of this kind, and to say that Sir Walter Scott particularly recommended me to do so. I was rather agreeably surprised by his appearance, after all I had heard of its homeliness; the predominant expression of countenance, is I think, a sort of arch good-nature, conveying a mingled impression of penetration and benevolence. The portrait in the last year's Literary Souvenir is an excellent likeness.

Chiefswood, July 13th.

"Will you not be alarmed at the sight of another portentous-looking letter, and that so soon again? But I have passed so happy a morning in exploring the 'Rhymour's Glen' with Sir Walter Scott, that following my first impulse on returning, I must communicate to you the impression of its pleasant hours, in full confidence that while they are yet fresh upon my mind, I shall thus impart to you something of my own enjoyment. Was it not delightful to ramble through the fairy ground of the hills, with the 'mighty master' himself for a guide, up wild and rocky paths, over rude bridges, and along bright windings of the little haunted stream, which fills the whole ravine with its voice! I wished for you so often! There was only an old countryman with us, upon whom Sir Walter is obliged to lean for support in such wild walks, so I had his conversation for several hours quite to myself, and it was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the deep and lonely scene; for he told me old legends, and repeated snatches of mountain ballads, and showed me the spot where Thomas of Ercildoune

'Was aware of a lady fair,
Came riding down the glen,'

which lady was no other than the fairy queen, who bore him away to her own mysterious land. We talked too of signs and omens, and strange sounds in the wind, and 'all things wonderful and wild;' and he described to me some gloomy cavern scenes which he had explored on the northern coast of Scotland, and mentioned his having heard the deep foreboding murmur of storms in the air, on those lonely shores, for hours and hours before the actual bursting of the tempest. We stopped in one spot which I particularly admired; the stream fell there down a steep bank into a little rocky basin overhung with mountain ash, and Sir Walter Scott desired the old peasant to make a seat there, kindly saying to me, 'I like to associate the names of my friends and those who interest me, with natural objects and favourite scenes, and this shall be called Mrs. Hemans' seat.' But how I wished you could have heard him describe a glorious sight which had been witnessed by a friend of his, the crossing the Rhine at Ehrenbreistein, by the German army of Liberators on their return from victory. 'At the first gleam of the river,' he said, 'they all burst forth into the national chant '*Am Rhein, am Rhein!*' They were two days passing over, and the rocks and the castle were ringing to the song the whole time, for each band renewed it while crossing, and the Cossacks with the clash and the clang, and the roll of their stormy war-music, catching the enthusiasm of the scene, swelled forth the chorus '*Am Rhein, am Rhein!*' I shall never forget the words, nor the look, nor the tone, with which he related this;* it came upon me suddenly, too, like that noble burst of warlike melody from the Edinburgh Castle rock, and I could not help answering it in his own words,

'"Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array.'

"I was surprised when I returned to Chiefswood to think that I had been conversing so freely and fearlessly with Sir Walter Scott, as with a friend of many days, and this at our first interview too! for he is only just returned to Abbotsford and he came to call on me this morning, when the

* Upon this anecdote Mrs. Hemans afterwards based one of the most spirited of her national lyrics, "The Rhine Song of the German Soldiers after victory." The effect of this when sung with a single voice and chorus, is most stately and exciting. The air had never before been mated with suitable words; the German *Trinklied*, (drinking song,) which belongs to it in the original, falls far behind the music, which is high-toned and spirited.

cordial greeting he gave me to Scotland, made me at once feel a sunny influence in his society. . . . . I am going to dine at Abbotsford to-morrow—how you would delight in the rich baronial-looking hall there, with the deep-toned coloured light, *brooding* upon arms and armorial bearings, and the fretted roof imitating the fairy sculpture of Melrose in its flower-like carvings! Rizzio's beautiful countenance has not yet taken its calm clear eyes from my imagination; the remembrance has given rise to some lines, which I will send to you when I write next. There is a sad *fearful* picture of Queen Mary in the Abbotsford dining-room. But I will release you from farther description for *this* time, and say farewell.

"Ever faithfully yours,
"F. H."

"I really have been careless in not saying to you any thing on the subject of my health . . . . . But besides that I fear I must plead guilty to never thinking about the matter when I wrote to you, I could not have said any thing *then* which would have given you much pleasure, as I suffered much for several days after my arrival here from those strange attacks of sudden palpitation of the heart. They have, however, been much less frequent during the last week; but how is it possible for such an aspen-leaf as myself, constantly trembling to the *rush* of some quick feeling, ever to be well? I sometimes enjoy a buoyancy both of frame and spirit, which, though fitful, is the utmost I can ever hope. . . . . Thanks for your kind reception of my little sketch—the brother or sister of which in my present packet hopes for as cordial a greeting—I find I have not left myself room to send you the lines upon Rizzio, but I feel so instantaneous an impulse to communicate to you whatever interests me, that I *know* I shall write from Abbotsford, and I will send them then. You are quite right; it *was* the description of that noble Rhine scene which interested me more than any part of Sir Walter's conversation, and I wished more that you could have heard it, than all the high legends and solemn scenes of which he spoke that day."

"Chiefswood, July 20th.

"Whether I shall return to you all 'brighter and happier,' as your letter so kindly prophesies, I know not: but I think there is every prospect of my returning more fitful and wilful than ever; for here I am leading my own free native life of the hills again, and if I could but bring some of my friends, as the old ballad says, 'near, near, *near* me,' I should indeed enjoy it; but that strange solitary feeling which I cannot chase away, comes over me too often like a dark sudden shadow, bringing with it an utter indifference to all around. I lose it most frequently, however, in the excitement of Sir Walter Scott's society. And with him I am now in constant intercourse, taking long walks over moor and woodland, and listening to song and legend of other times, until my mind quite forgets itself, and is carried wholly back to the days of the Slogan and the fiery cross, and the wild gatherings of border chivalry. I cannot say enough of his cordial kindness to me; it makes me feel, when at Abbotsford, as if the stately rooms of the proud ancestral-looking place, were old familiar scenes to me.—Yesterday he made a party to show me the 'pleasant banks of Yarrow,' about ten miles from hence: I went with him in an open carriage, and the day was lovely, smiling upon us with a *real blue* sunny sky, and we passed through I know not how many storied spots, and the spirit of the master-mind seemed to call up sudden pictures from every knoll and cairn as we went by—so vivid were his descriptions of the things that had been. The *names* of some of those scenes had, to be sure, rather savage sounds; such as '*Slain Man's Lea*,' '*Dead Man's Pool*,' &c., &c.; but I do not know whether these strange titles did not throw a deeper interest over woods and waters now so brightly peaceful. We passed one meadow on which Sir Walter's grandfather had been killed in a duel;* 'had it been a century earlier,' said he, 'a bloody feud would have been transmitted to me, as Spaniards bequeathed a game of chess to be finished by their children.' And I do think, that had *he* lived in those earlier days, no man would have more enjoyed what Sir Lucius O'Trigger is pleased to call '*a pretty quarrel;*' the whole expression of his benevolent countenance changes if he has but to speak of the dirk or the claymore: you see the spirit that would 'say amidst the trumpets ha! ha!' sud-

* A notice appeared in one of the periodicals of 1835, alluding to this letter, which was published in the Athenæum, for the purpose of correcting this statement. I regret that after much search, I have not been able to find it.

denly flashing from his gray eyes, and sometimes in repeating a verse of warlike minstrelsy, he will spring up as if he sought the sound of a distant gathering cry. But I am forgetting beautiful Yarrow, along the banks of which we walked through the Duke of Buccleugh's grounds, under old rich patrician trees; and at every turn of our path, the mountain stream seemed to assume a new character, sometimes lying under steep banks in dark transparence, sometimes

'crested with a tawny foam,
Like the mane of a chestnut steed.'

And there was Sir Walter beside me, repeating, with a tone of feeling as deep as if *then* only first wakened—

'They sought him east, they sought him west,
They sought him far with wail and sorrow;
There was nothing seen but the coming night,
And nothing heard but the roar of Yarrow.'

It was all like a dream. Do you remember Wordsworth's beautiful poem 'Yarrow visited?' I was ready to exclaim, in its opening words—'And is this Yarrow?'—There was nothing to disturb the deep and often solemn loveliness of the scenery: no *rose-coloured* spencers such as persecuted the unhappy Count Forbin amidst the pyramids—Mr. Hamilton, and Mrs. Lockart, and the boys, who followed us, were our whole party; and the sight of shepherds, real, not Arcadian shepherds, sleeping under their plaids to shelter from the noon-day, carried me at once into the heart of a pastoral and mountain country. We visited Newark tower, where, amongst other objects that awakened many thoughts, I found the name of Mungo Park, (who was a native of the Yarrow vale,) which he had inscribed himself, shortly before leaving his own bright river never to return. We came back to Abbotsford, where we were to pass the remainder of the day, partly along the Ettrick, and partly *through* the Tweed; on the way, we were talking of trees, in his love for which, Sir Walter is a perfect Evelyn. I mentioned to him what I once spoke of to you, the different sounds they give forth to the wind,* which he had observed, and he asked

* 'The arrowy spire,
Of the lone cypress—as of wood-girt fane,
Rests dark and still amid a heaven of fire.
The pine gives forth its odours, and the lake
Gleams like one ruby, and the soft winds wake,
Till every string of Nature's solemn lyre

me if I did not think that a union of music and poetry, varying in measure and expression, might in some degree imitate or represent those 'voices of trees;' and he described to me some highland music of a similar imitative character, called the 'notes of the sea-birds'—barbaric notes truly they must be!—In the evening we had a good deal of music: he is particularly fond of national airs, and I played him many, for which I wish you had heard how kindly and gracefully he thanked me. But, O! the bright swords! I must not forget to tell you how I sat, like Minna in the Pirate, (though *she* stood or moved I believe,) the very 'queen of swords.' I have the strongest love for the flash of glittering steel—and Sir Walter brought out I know not how many gallant blades to show me; one which had fought at Killicrankie, and one which had belonged to the young Prince Henry, James the First's son, and one which looked of as noble a race and temper as that with which Cœur de Lion severed the block of steel in Saladin's tent. What a number of things I have yet to tell you! I feel sure that my greatest pleasure from all these new objects of interest will arise from talking them over with you when I return. I hope you have received my letter with an account of the 'Rhymour's Glen,' and the little drawing of Chiefswood, for which I now send you a *pendant* in one of Abbotsford, which is at least recommended by its fidelity. . . . . Pray do not let me be forgotten amongst you while I am far away. I have always the strangest fear of being forgotten.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"F. H."

* "Thanks, many thanks, my dear ——, for your kind and welcome letter. You do not know how much I am cheered always by the sight of a packet from —— street. . . . . But away with all these ominous thoughts, for the sun—yes, indeed, in spite of all your brother's *southron*

> Is touched to answer its most secret tone
> Drawn from each tree, for each hath whispers all its own.'
> *Forest Sanctuary*, Canto ii. verse 72.

Many other happy and distinctive allusions to the sounds of the trees will be remembered by every one who is familiar with Mrs. Hemans' works. She was, indeed, peculiarly sensitive to the significance of natural sound. "If I were an enchantress," says she, in one of her letters, "I would certainly put a spell and a voice in all the trees, and streams, and flowers, and make them say the prettiest things imaginable about me to those in whom I am interested."

sauciness—a real Scottish sun is shining cheerily, and the little burn glancing brightly past—and, better than all—I think Sir Walter will be here this morning, and then I shall go and walk with him through the Rhymour's Glen, or the 'Hexel's Cleuch,' (which means as he tells me, the Witch's Dell,) or by some of his own woods, which he so loves and delights in. I am going to Abbotsford for some days on Saturday, and expect to carry away many delightful recollections and tales to tell by the fireside when I return to you all.

How I wish I could give you some idea of —— whom I have heard preach—how he dives, with an an actual *bodily* diving down into the abysses of his sermon, to fish up an argument; and how he nails the argument, with a resolute Jael-like gesture to the pulpit, when fairly caught—and how he complimenteth me, after a most solemn and delectable fashion. . . . All this must be matter for the discussion of future evening hours. Nathless, let me not forget to tell you now, lest, peradventure, it should escape me, how, in discoursing upon the various excellencies of that somewhat overrated insect, the ant, he exhorted his hearers to look upon 'that *gifted individual*,' and take pattern by her virtues.

"I am afraid I must give up the idea of ascending the Eildon Hill, though I have really felt better within the last ten days; those violent breathings of the heart have been much less frequent; but I have ominous warnings of them whenever I over exert myself. I have written your brother a long account of a day I passed on the banks of the lovely Yarrow. I hope he has received it long ere this. Now farewell for the present—in the house I cannot remain one moment longer.

"Ever your very affectionate,
"F. H."

TO A REMEMBERED PICTURE.

They haunt me still—those calm, pure, holy eyes!
Their piercing sweetness wanders thro' my dreams:
The soul of music that within them lies,
Comes o'er *my* soul in soft and sudden gleams;
Life—spirit-life—immortal and divine,
Is there—and yet how dark a death was thine!

Could it—oh! *could* it be—meek child of song!
The might of gentleness on that fair brow—
Was the celestial gift no shield from wrong?
Bore it no talisman to ward the blow?

Ask, if a flower upon the billows cast,
Might brave their strife—a flute note hush the blast?

Are there not deep sad oracles to read
In the clear stillness of that radiant face?
Yes, ev'n like *thee* must gifted spirits bleed,
Thrown on a world, for heavenly things no place!
Bright exiled birds that visit alien skies,
Pouring on storms their suppliant melodies.

And seeking ever some true, gentle breast,
Whereon their trembling plumage might repose,
And their free song-notes, from that happy nest,
Gush as a fount that forth from sun-light flows;
Vain dream! the love whose precious balms might save
Still, still denied;—they struggle to the grave.

Yet my heart shall not sink!—another doom,
Victim! hath set its promise in thine eye;
A light is there, too quenchless for the tomb,
Bright earnest of a nobler destiny.
Telling of answers, in some far-off sphere,
To the deep souls that find no echo here.*

Abbotsford, —— 26.

I believe I have imbodied in these lines my idea, not only of Rizzio's fate, but of Mary's; you, I recollect, thought the latter rather an imaginary view, and it may well be; for I have so often found a kind of relief in throwing the coloring of my own feelings over the destiny of historical characters, that it has almost become a habit of my mind. . . . . But how *can* I go on thus, speaking of myself, *here* in this faery realm of Abbotsford?—with so many relics of the chivalrous past around me, and the presiding spirit which has gathered them together still shedding out its own brightness over all! I have now had the gratification of seeing him in every point of view I could desire; we had one of the French princes here yesterday, with his suite;—the Duc de Chartres, son of the Duc de Orleans;—and there was naturally some little excitement diffused through the household by the arrival of a royal guest: Sir Walter was, however, exactly the same in his own manly simplicity;—kind, courteous, unaffected; '*his foot upon his native heath.*' I must say a few words of the Duc, who is a very elegant young man, pos-

* I have departed from my original plan in quoting one of Mrs. Hemans' poems entire:—it was necessary, in the present instance, for the clear understanding of the following letter.

sessing a finished and really *noble* grace of manner, which conveys at once the idea of Sir Philip Sidney's high thoughts seated 'in a heart of courtesy,' and which one likes to consider as an *appanage* of royal blood. I was a little nervous when Sir Walter handed me to the piano, on which I was the sole performer, for the delectation of the courtly party. *Son Altesse Royale* made a most exemplary listener; but my discovery that he was pleased to consider one of Count Oginski's polonaises as a *variation* upon that beautiful slow movement of Hummel's which you copied for me, and which is one of my especial favourites, very much neutralized the effect which his '*paroles d'or et de soie*' might otherwise have had upon my dazzled intellect. To-day, Lord —— is expected, with his eldest son, here called the 'Master of ——.' How completely that title brings back Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton to one's imagination! If the 'Master' have not something of the stately Edgar about him, I shall be rather disappointed. . . . . I am so glad you are going on so diligently with Spanish, and anticipate so much pleasure from your farther acquaintance with the beautiful Letrillas and romances I have collected myself. I have never had any companion in my Spanish studies, or any person who has taken the least interest in them before, —so that you will be the only friend associated with them in my recollection. I suppose these Abbotsford pens are all spoiled by the Waverley novels. I am really 'a woman to be pitied' for the one with which I write, and your lot in reading will not be much more enviable."

Mrs. Hemans returned from Abbotsford filled with grateful recollections of the kindness she had received within its walls, and of her intercourse with its master—as frank and simple-hearted as he was richly-gifted beyond the rest of his race. Some of his antiquarian treasures took a strong hold of her imagination; in particular, that picture of Mary Stuart which was painted after her execution; nor had she dwelt so long within the magician's precincts without having gathered up some of his legends. I remember her repeating, with great effect, the tradition of the Wild Huntsman being heard in the streets of Valenciennes shortly before the battle of Waterloo, which he had told her. Her mind was thoroughly awakened and kindled by this visit, to which she referred as one of the brightest passages of her life. She might well say, in one of her letters, "I shall bring with me many bright recollections from Scotland, and hope they will be the means of adding enjoyment to your fireside also."

Little more remains to be told of Mrs. Hemans' sojourn at Abbotsford. To one of her sons, however, who was her

companion in this interesting visit, I am indebted for an anecdote or two, which complete the picture. "She used to spend the mornings chiefly in taking long walks or drives with Sir Walter; in the evenings she used to play to him,* principally her sister's music, and sometimes sing—(for at an earlier age, when her health was strong, she had possessed a very good voice)—and I remember his saying to her, on one of these occasions, 'One would say you had too many accomplishments, Mrs. Hemans, were they not all made to give pleasure to those around you!' He was affected to tears by her reading aloud a little French poem, describing the sufferings of the Bourbons in the Conciergerie, and begged her to discontinue. . . . . I never heard Sir Walter make any allusion to his own fame, except on one occasion when we visited Newark Tower, and, on seeing two tourists make a precipitate retreat at our approach, he said, smiling,—'Ah, Mrs. Hemans, they little know what two lions they're running away from!'"

Farther letters of the same series contain accounts of Mrs. Hemans' visit to Hawthornden, Roslin, and other equally celebrated scenes of Scottish songs and story. After she left Abbotsford, she paid several visits to noble houses, and I regret much that I have been unable to find a letter, one of her liveliest, written from Hopetoun House, in which was described, with inimitable grace and liveliness, an adventure in a haunted chamber belonging to that mansion—a tapestried chamber, too: how she had retired to her pillow, conjuring up a thousand weird and shadowy images, till she became almost afraid of the phantoms of her own imagination; and when she looked round the room, started at the fantastic figures on the wall:—how, in the true heroine style, she must needs rise and examine these by the light of her taper;—when lo! instead of prince or paladin or bearded magician with fatal eyes, the object of her fear proved a Jemmy Jessamy shepherd, tranquilly pluckiug cherries in a tree, for the benefit of some equally Arcadian Silvi or Corisca below.

The three letters which follow were written upon her return to Edinburgh.

Albyn Place, Edinburgh, August 21st.

"I hope you have not felt anxious on account of my si-

* "I have marked all the music in my book which Sir Walter particularly enjoys; the 'Rhine Song' is one of his very great favorites, and a 'Cancionella Espanola' another: and of the 'Captive Knight' he is never weary."—*From a letter.*

lence, which, indeed, has been unusually long; but for several days after I last wrote, I was so languid, from over-fatigue, that I could only '*think to you*,' as I always do when any thing interests me. I am now better again, having been allowed a little more repose, and finding myself much more protected in Lady ——'s house (where I have passed the last fortnight) from the *inconveniences of celebrity*, which to me are often painfully oppressive. I cannot tell you how very welcome your letters are to me; how much they always seem to bring me back of pure and home-feeling—'the cup of water,' for which my spirit pines in the midst of excitement and adulation, and to which I turn from all else that is offered me, as I would to a place of shelter from the noon-day. . . . I have lost the castle now, and its martial music, being removed to a much less inspiring part of the town; but a few nights ago, I made a party to walk through some of the most beautiful streets by moonlight. We went along Prince's-street to the foot of the Calton Hill, and gazed down upon Holyrood, lying so dark and still in its desolateness, and forming so strong a contrast to the fair pillars of the Hill, which looked more pure and aerial than ever as they rose against the moonlight sky. '*Mais qu'ils se passent des orages du fond du cœur!*' and how little can those around one form an idea from outward signs of what may be overshadowing the inner world of the heart! Such a sense of strangeness and loneliness came suddenly over me, surrounded as I was, amidst all this dusky magnificence, by acquaintance of yesterday. I felt as if all I loved were so far, far removed from me, that I could have burst into tears from the rush of this unaccountable emotion. Had I possessed any power of '*gramarye*,' you would certainly have found yourself all of a sudden transported through the air. I am sure you would have enjoyed the scene, with all its bold outlines, gleaming lights, and massy shadows. . . . . Since I last wrote to you, I have been hearing —— preach, and am almost ashamed to tell you of the sense of disappointment I brought away with me. I really went prepared to yield up my whole spirit to the power of his genius—but alas, for my fastidious taste! With every disposition, with indeed the most anxious desire to be wholly subdued, I *could not* overcome the effect of his most untuneful voice, plebeian aspect, and dialect, illustrating Shakspeare's idea of having been 'at a feast of languages and brought away the scraps,'—the scraps of all that you can imagine most coarse and repelling. I was really angry with myself to find that the preacher's evidently deep

conviction, and unquestioned powers of thought, could never quell within me that provoking sense of the ludicrous which this 'scrannel-pipe' of a voice and barbaric accent perpetually excited. I have just returned with much more pleasing impressions from visiting a fine collection of pictures in which a Magdalen of Guido's, with the fervent expression of the upraised eye, and the desolate flow of the long hair, particularly struck me, and brought to recollection some passages of our favourite, Correggio.' I hope I shall have an interesting visit to describe to you when I write again, as Mr. Mackenzie, 'the Man of Feeling,' who is now very old and infirm, has sent to beg I would come and see him.

"I have just returned from paying the visit I mentioned, to old Mr. Mackenzie, and have been exceedingly interested. He is now very infirm, and his powers of mind are often much affected by the fitfulness of nervous indisposition; so that his daughter, who introduced me to his sitting-room, said very mournfully as we entered, 'You will see but the wreck of my father.' However, on my making some allusion, after his first kind and gentle reception of me, to the 'men of other times' with whom he had lived in such brilliant association, it was really like the effect produced on the Last Minstrel,—

> '—when he caught the measure wild,
> The old man raised his face and smiled,
> And lighted up his faded eye;'

for he became immediately excited, and all his furrowed countenance seemed kindling with recollections of a race gone by. It was singular to hear anecdotes of Hume, and Robertson, and Gibbon, and the other intellectual 'giants of old,' from one who had mingled with their minds in familiar converse. I felt as if carried back at least a century.

"'Ah!' said he, half playfully, half sadly, 'there were *men* in Scotland then!' I could not help thinking of the story of 'Ogier the Dane,'—do you recollect his grasping the iron crow of the peasant who broke into his sepulchre and exclaiming, 'It is well! there are men in Denmark still.' Poor Miss Mackenzie was so much affected by the sudden and almost unexpected awakening of her father's mind, that on leaving the room with me, she burst into tears, and was some time before she could conquer her strong emotion. I hope to have another interview with this delightful old man before I leave Edinburgh."

"8, Albyn Place, Edinburgh, August 26th, 1829.

. . . "I have now quite given up the idea of returning home by the lakes, as the weather is so very unpromising, and I do not feel myself equal to the fatigue of so much travelling by coaches. . . . . Since I last wrote I have become acquainted with Mr. ——, with whose works you are probably familiar, and have heard him preach; the general impression was a very delightful one, the more so, perhaps, as my fastidious taste had been so much disturbed by ——, that it really was glad to *repose* upon Mr. ——'s venerable countenance, graceful manner, and gentle earnestness of voice;—there is something of classic elegance about him, forming as strong a contrast to the harsher style of the Scotch kirk as a Doric temple would to the grim bleakness of a Methodist chapel. There is a tone of refinement in his conversation which quite answers the expectations awakened by his manner in the pulpit; indeed, his 'courtly grace' is rather *against* him here; for my part, I must own I found its effect very '*comfortable*.' I wished for you yesterday when I went to visit a fine colossal group of sculpture, Ajax bearing away the body of Patroclus, which has just been completed by an Edinburgh artist, and is exciting much interest here. Its effect, standing as it does quite alone in the midst of a large hall hung with dark crimson, is exceedingly imposing; and the contrast of life and death in the forms of the combating and the departed warrior, struck me as full of power and thought. The *men* of hats and *great coats* who were standing round it looked so mean and insignificant, that I quite longed to blow them away, and to surround the heroic vision with a stately solitude. I always forgot to send an inscription which I copied for you from a silver urn at Abbotsford, sent by Lord Byron to Sir Walter Scott. I thought it might interest you, and enclose it now."

In the next letter of the series, Mrs. Hemans alludes to the bust executed by Mr. Angus Fletcher, whilst she was on a visit to her friend Sir Robert Liston, which, as a graceful and faithful work of art, deserves an especial mention, no less than for its being the only model taken of her features. Few celebrated authors, indeed, have caused so little spoliation of canvass or marble as Mrs. Hemans. She never sat for her picture willingly, and the play of her fea-

tures was so quick and changeful, as to render the artist's task difficult almost to impossibility.

Milburn Tower.

"Instead of requiring you to be 'made of apologies,'—dear cousin —— 'I really think you are too kind in writing to me again after leaving your former letter so long unanswered. I am very glad you are returned home, as I look for much delight from meeting you all together once more after my wanderings. I began to think, some little time since, that I really never *should* disentangle myself from the 'wily Scotchmen.' After many struggles, however, I have at last extricated myself, and hope to be with you all again in the course of a very few days; and if it were not for the thoughts of returning to friends so kind and dear, I might well regret leaving the land where I have been so warmly welcomed. Will you give my kind love to your sister, with thanks for her interesting letter, and tell her that sitting for a bust, awful as it may sound, is by no means an infliction so terrible as sitting for a picture; the sculptor allows much greater liberty of action, as every part of the head and form is necessary to *his* work. My *effigy* is now nearly completed, and is thought to be a performance of much talent: it is so very graceful that I cannot but accuse the artist of flattery, the only fault he has given me any reason to find. I am glad to think that you will probably see it, as Mr. Fletcher talks of exhibiting it in Liverpool. I should like to have witnessed your exploits . . . . but, believe me, cousin, they are nothing to what I have achieved in the 'north countrie' with my mazourkas, and polonoises, and another waltz which my good old host, Sir —— is pleased to call one of my '*wildnesses*,' and which have actually won from a grave clergyman of the Scottish kirk a sonnet,—yes, a veritable sonnet—inspired, as he declares, by my 'flying fingers' soft control.' With this, and the admiration of —— to boot, it is not marvellous that my head retains any sort of equilibrium? Treat me with due reverence, *Sir and my cousin*, when next we meet, that I may be let down to the familiarities of ordinary life by gentle degrees. Your visits to Boscobel and Hodnet must have been delightful—the latter especially; I admire your resolute spirit of *faith:* for my part, so determined is *mine*, that if I went to Rushin Castle, I should certainly look for the giant, said to be chained and slumbering in the dark vaults of that pile. Well, *mon cousin*, we shall meet so soon that

it is now scarcely worth while to talk over one's adventures in writing; besides, I feel myself in a state of dulness, having been obliged to entertain a party of leeches to my head last night, who seem to have drawn therefrom whatever brilliance it might have contained. I will therefore only add Charles and Henry's love to my own, and beg you to believe me,

"Ever most truly yours,

"F. H."

CHAPTER XI.

The "Songs of the Affections"—Extract from familiar correspondence—Haunted Hamlet near Melrose—"Rhine Song"—Lewis's "Tales of Terror"—Dr. Channing—Ballad on the Death of Aliatar—New Year's wishes—"The Fall of Ninevah"—"A Spirit's Return"—Analysis of character—the Rev. Edward Irving—De Lamartine's Poems—Mr. Roscoe—Pergolesi's "*Stabat Mater*"—New songs by Moore and Bishop—Manzoni's "*Cinque Maggio*" Godwin's "Cloudesly"—Projected journey to the Lakes—Dramatic Scene—New volume of poems.

It was towards the close of the year 1829, that Mrs. Hemans began to contemplate the publication of a new volume of poems. She had already made some preparation for this by contributing a series of lyrics under the title of 'Songs of the Affections" to Blackwood's Magazine; together with the long ballad, "The Lady of Provence," which, for the glowing pictures it contains, the lofty yet tender affection to which it is consecrated, and the striking but never uncouth changes of its versification, must be considered as one of its author's finest *chivalresque* poems. She had still, however, to produce some work of greater importance than these, suitable for the commencement of a volume. The subject at length fixed upon by her, as peculiar as it was almost dangerously fascinating, was suggested by a fire-side conversation. It had long been a favorite amusement to wind up our evenings by telling ghost stories. One night, however, the store of thrilling narratives was exhausted, and we began to talk of the feelings with which the presence and the speech of a visitant from another world (if, indeed, a spirit *could* return,) would be most likely to impress the person so visited. After having exhausted all the common varieties of fear and terror in our speculations, Mrs. Hemans said that she thought the predominant sensations at the time must at once partake of awe and rapture, and resemble the feelings of those who listen to a revelation, and at the same moment know themselves to be favored above all men, and humbled before a being no longer sharing their own cares or passions; but that the person so visited must thenceforward and for ever be inevitably separated from this world and its concerns: for the soul which had once enjoyed such a strange and spiritual communion, which had been permitted to look, though but for a moment, beyond the mysterious gates of death, *must* be

raised, by its experience, too high for common grief again to perplex, or common joy to enliven.

I must tell you how much pleasure I have, my dear sir, in renewing the long suspended intercourse by our own 'post,' who is, I hope prepared with due resignation for the days of toil that await her. I seem scarcely to have seen you since my return. . . Would you have the kindness either to bring or send me, when you have leisure to find it, the number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr. Carlyle's remarks on Burns, with which I much wish to renew my acquaintance.

"I always forgot to tell you that I had the comfortable satisfaction of beholding with my own eyes, near Melrose, the site of a little hamlet which had been deserted, not many years ago, on account of the visits of a spirit. The ghost used to come about (*whistling*, I believe) at night, from one house to another, and the inhabitants never could accustom themselves to his incursions; so they one and all migrated; and I believe he still retains possession of the territory. This was told me by Sir Walter, and very satisfactorily attested by an old shepherd, whose uncle or aunt had been one of the aggrieved natives, therefore, I hope you will receive it in a proper spirit of faith."

"Would you be so kind as to write for me again those lines of Catullus on the return home, which you gave me some time since? I cannot at present find the copy. I should like them to be transcribed at the end of the MS. book which I send, and to which, recording as it does the various tastes and fancies and feelings of several years, I think they *will* form a not inappropriate conclusion. I am still enjoying, in much quiescence, the comparative stillness of my home, only I find it rather difficult to return to the *dinner ordering* cares of life, and should think a month's sojourn in the Castle of Indolence with 'naught around but images of *Rest*,' the most delightful thing in the world. How very truly you have often said that society could never be the sphere for me! I am come to a sort of comfortable conviction that you generally speak oracles on such subjects, at least as far as regards myself. . . . . Will you come here some evening early next week and read to me of 'Paynim chief and Christian knight;' shall it be on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday? or this evening, if you are disengaged? but, if not, will you tell ——— I should be very glad to see him here. Can you divine on what days the musical lectures are to be given, which I wish to attend? They were the three on Na-

tional, German, and Church music, but I quite forget in what order they were to come.

"Ever most truly yours,

"F. H."

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* "I am delighted that you were all so much pleased with the Rhine song, but I *could not* satisfy myself—it is a very weary feeling, that striving after the ideal beauty which one never, *never* can grasp. I am going to be quite alone this evening: how I wish you could come!"

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* "I had various fortunes in the world after I left you, my dear ———, and but little of the 'gentle satisfaction' I had proposed to myself from taking out my card-case. However, I do not consider the morning as entirely lost, since, at one house, where the lady was some time in making her appearance, I edified myself by the study of 'Pascal on the weakness of man.' . . . . . I do not send Lewis's Tales of Terror, because I mean to have the pleasure of bringing them myself some evening if you should be disengaged, the week after next. I shall make myself look as ghostly as possible, and come in the character of the 'grim white woman.' Can you imagine one of my ballads, I do not know which, made into a sort of musical drama, and performed with scenery, &c.? I saw an account of it in an Irish newspaper, which my brother George sent me. It was performed at Lord F. Leveson Gower's, and the music, by an Italian professor, is said to be very beautiful.

"I return the 'Fair Maid of Perth' with many thanks. Do not forget to tell me when you wish to send the Rhine song to ———: I can get it franked if you like.

"Ever your affectionate

"Felicia."

"I send you all the writings of Dr. Channing which I have yet been able to find, but I regret that amidst the revolutions of my little state during my absence, the 'Essay on Fenelon,' which, perhaps, you would wish to have, has for the present disappeared. The ordination discourse, with

which I do not know whether you are acquainted, is, in my opinion, the noblest and most spirit-stirring of all these works. And yet, though the voice of Channing's mind be both a winning and a mighty one, 'like to a trumpet with a silver sound,' I almost doubt the power of *any* voice to re-awaken a spirit in the state you describe:—it is not

> 'As violets plucked, which sweetest showers
> May ne'er make grow again!'

I wish I could think otherwise, because the idea of such a state is one which often occurs to me, and which I contemplate in fear and sadness. I have found the Spanish ballad on the death of Aliatar, since you were here; and have been surprised, notwithstanding all the proud music of the original language, by the superior beauty of Southey's translation. The *refrain* of

> 'Tristes marchando,
> Las trompas roncas,'

has certainly a more *stately* tone of sorrow, than

> 'Sad and slow,
> Home they go;'

and yet the latter is to me a thousand times more touching. Is it that word *home* which makes it so, with all that it breathes of tenderness and sadness? I shall bring it with me to-morrow, and then we can decide. I shall be in ——— Street soon after twelve, and I mean to come armed for the lecture, by enveloping myself in Prince Charles Edward's '*escape tartan*,' as they call it in Scotland, which I do think must have some power to assist me in evading the pursuit of the ———s. I mention this circumstance in order to prepare* you for my Avatar in such a costume, which I fear, notwithstanding this precaution, may come upon you with all the effect of 'Roy's wife,' or 'Scots who hae wi' Wallace bled.'"

* * * *

". . . . I am sure I should have been much better, but for an alarm of *invasion*, which occurred late in the night, and the disturbance occasioned by which has somewhat increased my nervous tremors, as you may judge by the ridi-

* In explanation of this pleasantry, it may be as well to state that the party addressed was accused of sharing, to the full, in Doctor Johnson's *Southron* prejudices and antipathies.

culous hand I am writing. Some of the letters put me in mind of Sir Walter Scott's description of an octagon, which he calls 'a circle in an ague-fit.' I thought I had a great many things to speak to you about and to show you yesterday evening; but, somehow or other, they were all driven out of my foolish head, and have found a place, I would fain hope, in *your* planet, where, perhaps, they may one day be found with other lost 'subtleties.' I send you 'Garcilaso,' whose volume pray keep, as long as your reading it without interrupting other studies may require; it is not new to me. I wish you would mark any passages that strike you." . . .

"I think I must have seemed very ungrateful, in not having more warmly thanked you for all your good wishes on the approach of another year, which have been so kindly expressed. But there is something in the expression of such wishes, when I know them, as I *do* know them, from you to be cordial and sincere, which awakens within me a feeling at once too grateful and too sorrowful to find utterance in language. They come to me almost as joyful music from shore might come to one far on the waters, speaking of things in which he has 'neither part nor share,' and yet the sound is welcome. Will you believe how unfeignedly I would return such wishes to you, whose path yet lies before you, and yet I fain hope would lead to happiness? And wherever that path may take you, or whatever *my* fate may be, when you would seek pleasure or comfort from the idea that you are followed by many and earnest thoughts of kindness, will you then think of me, as one who will ever feel in your welfare the faithful interest of a sisterly friend?*

"Ever most truly yours,

"F. H."

"My Dear sir,

". . . . I hope we shall have a *German* evening soon; I have found some fine old ballads in the 'Wunderhorn,' which I want to show you, and we must read a little of

* I hope it is hardly necessary to point to the singular beauty of expression and feeling of this note, as an excuse for printing one so exclusively personal in its subject.

Iphigenia; I had no idea that those awful iambics, (if iambics they be, for I am in the profoundest ignorance on such subjects,) could have retained so much harmony in our language.

"On calling up and reconsidering my impressions of Martin's picture,* it seems to me that something more of gloomy grandeur might have been thrown about the funeral pyre; that it should have looked more like a *thing apart*, almost suggesting of itself the idea of an awful sacrifice. Perhaps it was not in the resources of the painter to do all this; but the imagination, *mine* at least, seems to require it.

"I should like you to read over my Spirit song to yourself, when you have leisure, and then tell me your impression of it; I will send it in a day or two. Sometimes I think that I have sacrificed too much in the apparition scene, to the idea that sweetness and beauty might be combined with supernatural effect; the character of the Greek sculpture, which has so singular a hold upon my imagination, was much in my thoughts at the time. You must tell me anything that occurs to you on the subject. Have you read Manzoni's noble ode on the death-day of Napoleon, translated by Archdeacon Wrangham? It has just been sent me by Signor Grimaldi, and I know not when I have met with Italian poetry so rich in deep thought and powerful expression.

"Ever believe me faithfully yours,

"F. H."

"I † regret that your kind note should have remained so long unanswered, but as some compensation, if indeed I may call it such, I send you a few songs to read, which I have lately been writing for music, and which I thought you would, perhaps, like to see before they are sent to the composers. You will, perhaps, trace the *last* to some of the associations awakened by our Utilitarian friend, though I think his pretensions to that title are as dubious as ——— very contemptuously said Mr. ———'s were to the character of a *gourmand*. I do not know when I have been more amused than by his grotesque flights of conversation the evening I met him at your house, though I *was* a little startled at the idea of '*my grandfather's head*,' which his

* The Fall of Nineveh.

† This letter has been accidentally displaced: it belongs to the memorials of the ensuing winter.

fancy wanted to set before me in a charger. I hope you have at last run the gauntlet through all the Rontim-Bontims, and are allowing yourself a little rest; otherwise, I must say, with my particular favourite 'Daniel O'Rourke,' I think you 'a man to be pitied among them:' my own intimate conviction being that 'of all dull things, the dullest is festivity,' I am prepared to give you as much sympathy on the occasion as you may require. Pray do not ask about my 'Fantasy-piece,' or I shall think you *an embodied conscience*, (a sort of demon, which, by-the-by, I think I might introduce with appalling effect whenever the work *is* written.) I am sojourning in the Castle of Indolence, and I will not be disturbed. There is a queenly sentence for you! Wake me not!

"Have you looked at Moore's Byron yet? I must say that what I have seen of it in the papers, is to me so inexpressibly disgusting, that I shall certainly not read the book until I hear your report."

"I rather think that I write to you this morning solely *pour promener mes degouts*, on which I expect you will bestow as much sympathy as may reasonably be demanded. I am so thoroughly tired of criticism and analysis, and sharp two-edged swords of sentences, that I really begin to look upon Goethe's currant wine making women, as true and fitting models for feminine imitation. *Qu'en pensez-vous?* For my part, I have serious thoughts of going over to this side, and I hereby invite you to come and partake of the first metheglin, hippocras, or pigment, in which my genius may find its proper and natural channel, and flow forth to the gladdening of all my happy friends.

"In the mean time, however, as the materials for these my designs cannot be immediately collected, I send you part of the conversation which so much delighted me in Tieck's 'Phantasien.' I think you will recognise all the high tone of the thoughts, and be pleased with the glimpse, a bright though transient one, of the dreaming-land—that strange world, which were I to designate it by my own experience, I should call a wilderness of beauty and of sorrow."

"Many thanks for all your kind remembrance of me. I really think the music beautiful, particularly at the close, and only wonder it has not made a fuller impression upon you. As for the launch,* provided the weather will allow of my witnessing it, I have no fear of disappointment. My imagination generally does me one good service on such occasions, that of

> 'Clothing the palpable and the familiar
> With golden exhalations like the morn.'

I believe it is only where the *feelings* are deeply interested that the imagination causes such perpetual bitterness of disappointment. Do you remember St. Leon's dissatisfaction at the manner in which his daughters receive the tidings of his death? I begin to think that all imaginative persons are, to a certain degree, St. Leons, and that they expect what human nature is very seldom rich enough to afford. I scarcely think you have had an opportunity of observing the *most* amusing peculiarities in my guest, who has now left me. I almost thought she would herself have *called out* a person by whom I latterly conceived myself aggrieved, and I do not believe that he could, consistently with any regard for his personal safety, have crossed the threshold during his stay with me. Truly it is very pleasant to be so well guarded; but I cannot reconcile myself to that prevailing habit of *analysing* everything, fancies, feelings, even friends—which is the favourite occupation of her mind. Now I can bear being analysed with perfect indifference; but my friends are so completely severed and set apart in my eyes from all the *gentile* world, that I have no idea of their being subjected to this desecrating process, actually made studies of character to be examined 'in the light of common day.' No, it is not to

* This was one of the sights which Mrs. Hemans had expressed the strongest wish to see. She had always, it may be remembered, a more than common interest in the things of the sea; and the spectacle not only touched her enthusiastic English feelings, but excited her imagination, by suggesting to her the many chances and changes which must befal the traveller of the ocean, whose birth, as it were, she witnessed. Something of this nature she had previously expressed in her lyric, "The parting ship." But the vessel she saw launched was but a second-rate merchantman; and I cannot but think she must have been disappointed, because no allusion to the sight (with her, a natural and necessary consequence of any addition made to her store of pleasures) is, as far as I am aware, to be found in any of her later poems.

be endured, whatever skill and science may be brought to the work of dissection.

I was told yesterday by Mr. Scoresby, that Mr. Irving is to preach in Liverpool next Sunday. I wish very much to hear him. Would you go with me? I must own, in all contrition of spirit, that I have never been very much affected by any pulpit eloquence, and hoping that the cause does not lie in my own incorrigible hardness of heart, I am really anxious to give myself another trial, and should be delighted to find my mind thoroughly subdued." . . .

TO MR. L——.

"March 30, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I send the two songs* which I beg you to accept as a token of the real delight your music has afforded me. As I have written them expressly for you, pray tell me candidly whether you find difficulties from any parts of the measure, and would like to have some alterations; because I really wish to make them what you will feel most pleasure in setting. I should not so much ask whether you find *difficulties*, because those I know you could soon overcome, as whether you think any passage unsuitable to music. . .

"I send 'the Beacon,' which I hope will not disappoint you, and I believe you also wished to look at Lamartine's poems; they certainly possess a much deeper feeling than I have ever met with in French poetry, excepting perhaps, that of Casimir Delavigne." . . . .

TO MR. L——.

April, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I write to tell you that I passed some time this morning with Mr. Roscoe, and on mentioning to him your wish of calling, he gave me leave to say, that he should have much pleasure in receiving you any day between the hours of twelve and three. I told him of the interest you took in

* "*The Muffled Drum*," and the "*Spirit's Song*:" both of these have been recently published with their very characteristic and expressive music.

Italian literature, and he said he should like much to show you a splendid edition of the life of Lorenzo, lately sent him by the Grand Duke of Tuscany. As his health is extremely unsettled, and he happens just now to have a bright interval, I should think you had better avail yourself of it, for he is often obliged to pass months in entire seclusion. . . . I enclose the altered verse of the 'Spirit's Voice,' in which I hope the difficulties are now obviated. I have found so very few *brothers-in-rhyme* to the unhappy word 'never,' that I thought it better to excommunicate him at once.

"Very sincerely yours, &c. &c.

"F. H."

Earlier allusion should have been made, in enumerating the pleasures and privileges of Mrs. Hemans' residence in Liverpool, to her occasional intercourse with Mr. Roscoe, who was then passing through an old age of such serenity and cheerfulness, as can never be forgotten by those who were permitted to look upon it. In spite of the inroads made by repeated illness, his mind remained bright and benevolent to the last; so long as they were permitted to approach him, he appeared to take pleasure in the visits of the young,—would interest himself in their little plans and prospects, and talk to them of his own past labours with the conscious pleasure of one who feels that "his work hath well been done." In the poetry of Mrs. Hemans Mr. Roscoe had always taken great pleasure; he was fond of having it read in his hearing. I know that she felt the full value of his approbation, and used to speak of him with almost filial regard, and of her visits to to him as among the happiest and most salutary hours she passed. In general, she was singularly fond of the society of old men.

TO MR. L——.

April, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I am quite sorry that you should have distressed yourself about the 'Ricciarda,' which I found this morning in the room where you had left your cloak, and I was regretting that I had no means of sending it to you. I am *sure* that I shall be delighted with your arrangement of the 'Parting words,'

because I never find any music embody, like yours, all those shades and fluctuations of feeling which I so often vainly strive to fix in language; and whenever I try to write any thing of deeper and more fervent character than usual, I shall always wish for you to give it expression.

"It is quite impossible for me to tell you the impression I have received from that most spiritual music of Pergolesi's,* which really *haunted* me the whole night. How much I have to thank you for introducing me, in such a manner, to so new and glorious a world of musical thought and feeling.

"I shall read the life of Haydn with great interest. An Edinburgh journal, which I have just received, gives an account of a new work by Moore and Bishop, which, perhaps, you may like to see, and I therefore send it: though the poetry seems to me but of a *tinkling* character: one verse of 'The stilly night,' or 'Those evening bells,' I should say was worth it all. . . . . I have just had a very amusing visit from a Spaniard, who told me that he used to write poetry, but 'that the Muses *looked cross at him* for keeping account-books.'

"Very sincerely yours, &c. &c.
"F. H."

"I have found the music to the 'Burial of Sir John Moore,' which I send you to look at, though I think it very inferior to the words, which would require something dark and deep and *Beethovenish*."

TO MR. L——.

"April 8th, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"I am predetermined not to give Mr. ——'a single sous' of praise, and it must have been with the view of confirming me in this resolve that you have communicated the opinion of——. Pray accept my best thanks for the songs,

* His "*Stabet Mater*." The earnest, enthusiastic, affectionate character of Pergolesi, and his early death, hastened, it was said, by the delay of that success which was the due of his splendid genius, was sure to interest Mrs. Hemans. She once thought, I believe, of making his feelings and fortunes the subject of a poem.

the music of which I am sure *must* give me pleasure, though it may increase my regret for the privation of my voice. I shall be very glad to become acquainted with part of your opera. As for those most Arcadian decorations, I should as soon have suspected you of the suggestion—'Write an ode to music.' That fearful word *ode*, reminds me of Manzoni, whose splendid poem, the '*Cinque Maggio*,' I enclose, and beg you to keep, as I can now procure another copy: some of its verses remind me of Sir Philip Sidney's idea with regard to Chevy Chase, which he said 'stirred the heart like the sound of a trumpet." . . . .

"I fear I shall have detained your servant an unconscionable time; I have had some difficulty in finding ——'s volume, which my *Folletto*—(did I ever tell you I had a Folleto quite as mischievous as Tasso's?) had provokingly hidden. You are further to attribute to the agency of this wicked sprite the various blots and erasures with which my note seems to abound.

"Very sincerely yours,

"F. H."

TO MR. L——.

"May 10th.

"My dear Sir,

"How much you must have enjoyed that spirit-stirring music of 'Guillaume Tell!' Oh! that I could have been there!—but the nearest approach to musical sounds which has greeted my ear since you went, (for I have been too unwell either to go out or to play myself,) has been the gentle ticking of Dr. R——'s watch, regularly produced on the portentous occasion of feeling my pulse. So vegetative a life, indeed, have I been leading, that if I lived in the old mythological days, I should certainly imagine I was undergoing a metamorphose into some kind of tree. The doctors have announced that, without very great care, another winter in this climate will be dangerous to me:—truly, a comfortable sentence to me who never could take care of myself in my life; indeed it is a thing which I am convinced requires *a natural genius* for care to succeed in it at all. I have been reading Godwin's 'Cloudesley:' it does not, I think, carry away the imagination with anything like the mighty spirit of his earlier works,—but is beautifully

written, with an occasional flow of rich and fervent eloquence, reminding me of the effects he attributes to the conversation of his own old alchemist, in 'St. Leon.' Pray tell me if you have composed anything since your arrival in town. Your being able to compose there *at all* is to me little less marvellous than alchemy itself, or any other of Mr. Godwin's phantasies. I wonder whether the enclosed lines will remind you at all of Pergolesi. I had his music full in my imagination when I composed them. I was very ill and faint; not exactly fancying myself arrived at life's last hour, but longing to hear such a strain as the '*Stabat Mater*.'"

In the spring of 1830, Mrs. Hemans projected that journey to the Lake district, of which so delightful a record will be found in the following chapter. She made her escape from a neighbourhood, *outwardly* always distasteful to her, for its total want of beautiful scenery,—all the more gladly, from having been more than usually pressed upon by the claims and the curiosity of strangers. To a visitation from one of the latter, the humours of which were more than usually ludicrous, reference is made in the two following fragments.

* "My dear ——,

"Will you come and see me to-morrow evening with your brother?—do, there is a good girl!—and shall I come and see you on Wednesday evening? You would all get wofully tired of me at this rate, but I am going away so soon that the danger will for the present be obviated. I wish you were going with me—what a great deal of mischief we might accomplish together! the very rumour of it would startle Mr. De Quincy out of his deepest opium-dream. What a pity such brilliant exploits are to remain lost among the things that might have been! 'The ibis and the crocodile would have trembled to hear of them.' Now dear ——, be sure you come to-morrow evening. . . . . .

"Oh! the ——. . . . . ! she came and laid her friendship at my feet the morning of her departure, and I, 'pebble-hearted' wretch that I am! never stooped to pick it up."

"I had given up the weary task of attempting to curtail those hundred-footed speeches in the dramatic scene,* before I received your note. I only altered one line, having made sufficient progress in natural history, since I wrote, to discover that lions do not attack people who are asleep! Heaven be praised! —— really has evaporated! she paid her farewell visit the other morning after you were here, and made so formal, serious, and solemn an offer of her friendship, 'for ever and a day,' that I, secretly conscious of my own unworthiness, was perfectly bewildered, and can only hope that my blushes on this trying occasion were attributed to an excess of sensibility."

The "Songs of the Affections" were published in the summer of 1830. This collection of lyrics has been, perhaps, less popular than other of Mrs. Hemans' later works. It was hardly, indeed, to be expected, that the principal poem, "A Spirit's Return," the origin and subject of which have been already described, should appeal to the feelings of so large a circle as had borne witness to the truth of the tales of actual life and sacrifice and suffering contained in the "Records of woman." But there are parts of the poem solemnly and impressively powerful.—The passages in which the speaker describes her youth—the disposition born with her to take pleasure in spiritual contemplations, and to listen to that voice in nature which speaks of another state of being beyond this visible world—prepare us most naturally for the agony of her desire,—when he, in whom she had devotedly embarked all her earthly hopes and affections

> . . . "till the world held nought
> Save the *one* being to my centred thought."

was taken away from her for ever—to see him, if but for a moment—to speak with him, only once again! The coming of the apparition, too, is described with all the plainness and intensity of the most entire conviction, so difficult, in these days, for a writer to assume.† As the crisis of interest ap-

* "Don Sebastian," a fragment of a dramatic poem, published among the "Poetical Remains."

† Might it not almost be said, so impossible to be assumed by those who have wholly and scornfully cast off those superstitions, so distaste-

proaches, the variety given by alternate rhymes to the heroic measure in which the tale was written, is wisely laid aside, and it proceeds with a resistless energy.

> "Hast thou been told that from the viewless bourne
> The dark way never hath allowed return?
> That all, which tears can move, with life is fled,
> That earthly love is powerless on the dead?
> Believe it not!—there is a large lone star
> Now burning o'er yon western hill afar,
> And under its clear light there lies a spot
> Which well might utter forth 'Believe it not!'
>
> I sat beneath that planet,—I had wept
> My wo to stillness; every night-wind slept;
> A hush was on the hills; the very streams
> Went by like clouds, or noiseless founts in dreams,
> And the dark tree o'ershadowing me that hour,
> Stood motionless, even as the gray church-tower
> Whereon I gazed unconsciously;—there came
> A low sound, like the tremor of a flame,
> Or like the light quick shiver of a wing,
> Flitting through twilight woods, across the air;
> And I looked up!—oh! for strong words to bring
> Conviction o'er thy thought!—Before me there,
> He, the departed, stood!—ay, face to face—
> So near, and yet how far!" * * * *

The conclusion of this fine poem is far from fulfilling the promise of its commencement: but it was impossible to imagine any events, or give utterance to any feelings, succeeding those so awful and exciting, which should not appear feeble, and vague, and exhausted. Mrs. Hemans would sometimes regret that she had not bestowed more labour upon the close of her work: this it is true, might have been more carefully elaborated; but, from the nature of her subject, I doubt the possibility of its having been substantially improved.

ful to reason, but so dear to fancy? It is impossible, in reading Sir Walter Scott's incomparable descriptions of supernatural visitations,—the episode of the "Bodach Glas," for instance, or "Wandering Willie's tale," or the vigil of Master Holdenough in the Mirror Chamber, (though this is afterward explained away,)—to imagine that the creator of these scenes did not, in some measure, *believe* in their possibility, though it might be but with a poetical faith. Were it otherwise, they must strike us as unnaturally as the recent French revivifications of the antique Catholic legends and mysteries—as merely grotesque old fables, adopted as studies by clever artists, for the sake of their glaring contrasts and effective situations.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Wordsworth's poetry—Mrs. Hemans' visit to the Lakes—Her letters from Rydal Mount—Passage from Haco—Genius compatible with domestic happiness—State of music among the Lakes—Mr. Wordsworth's reading aloud—Anecdote—Dove Nest—Accident on horseback—Letters from Dove Nest—Winandermere—The St. Cecilia—Whimsical letter—Letter of counsel—Commissions—Anecdote of a bridal gift—Readings of Schiller—Second Journey into Scotland—M. Jeffrey—*Six Mrs. Hemans.*—Change of residence.

EARLY in the summer, Mrs. Hemans put into execution her long cherished plan of finding rest and refreshment for a weary spirit among the beautiful scenery of the Lakes. She was drawn thither by the additional motive of a wish to enjoy the personal intercourse of one whom, for the sake of his writings, she had long loved and reverenced as a friend and a counsellor. And thus it is, indeed, that all poets who are true to the divine gifts bestowed upon them, must ultimately be regarded by the sincere and faithful-hearted: though, for awhile, their voices may be drowned by the outcries which the world idly raises against what it will not take the trouble, or *fears*, to understand. The feelings which impressed Mrs. Hemans on being first introduced to the poetry of Mr. Wordsworth, have been already shown in her own confession:—I must insist upon the fact that her conviction of his great and noble powers grew upon her with every year of her life; and, I am persuaded, ultimately exercised a beneficial and calming effect upon a mind, by nature eager, and by circumstances rendered, for a time impatient, and ill at ease, and subject to the most painful alternations of mood. Mrs. Hemans' copy of Mr. Wordsworth's works might be called her poetical breviary: there was scarcely a page that had not its mark of admiration or its marginal comment or illustration.*

* It was a habit with Mrs. Hemans, to illustrate her favourite books with the thoughts excited by their perusal, and with such parallel pas-

She was unwearied in recommending the study of his poems, and in pointing out and repeating their finest passages. Then, too, her political biases (gentle as they were, and never for a moment made manifest in controversy) made her look up to him as one of the few, in whose reverence for the wisdom of our ancestors, and manly religious feeling, and deep wisdom, lay the hope and safety of our country.

On all these grounds, it will be readily imagined with what delight Mrs. Hemans looked forward to enjoying such companionship for a short summer-season. She had been worn out with empty flattery and vulgar curiosity, and longed for shelter, and silence, and repose,

> . . . . . "in sunny garden bowers
> Where vernal winds each tree's low tones awaken,
> And bud and bell with changes mark the hours."

With what a natural eloquence of gladness she poured forth her delight in finding her expectations more than realized, the following letters will show. They are purposely given with fewer omissions than any of the previous series, as offering a perfect picture of her mind, when under its best influences, and least shaken by the cares which, at times, weighed it down so heavily. Nor with the pleasantries they contain—in which the poet of thought and daily life, and the poetess of the affections and of the imagination, are so happily contrasted—be misunderstood by those who love a mind none the less for its changes from grave to gay, and who find a security for its truth, in the artless expression of all its modes and fancies.

Mrs. Hemans was accompanied on this journey by her youngest son—the other two still under her care joining her when she was settled among the Lakes. As usual, she was unwearied in communicating her impressions to those

sages from other writers as bore upon their subject. If one of her intimate friends lent her a book which she chanced to *adopt*, it was sure to return thus enriched. I remember, in particular, that her copy of Mr. Auldjo's "Ascent of Mont Blanc"—which, fortunately, had the amplest of margins—was positively written over with snatches of description, and quotations of poetry, for some of which, I suspect, it would have been no more difficult to find their owner, than it was to assign the delightful fragments from "Old Plays," which headed the chapters of the Waverley Novels, to their real source.

with whom, when at home, she shared every thought and feeling of the passing hour.

"Rydal Mount, Monday, June 22d, 1830.

"You were very kind in writing to me so soon ——, and making the remembrance of my journey with you one of unmingled pleasure, by your assurance that all was well on your return. For myself, I can truly say that my enjoyment of your society and kindness, and the lovely scenery by which we were surrounded, made those pleasant days seem as a little isle of sunshine in my life, to which I know that memory will again and again return. I felt very forlorn after you were gone from Ambleside: —— came and went without exciting a smile, and my nervous fear at the idea of presenting myself alone to Mr. Wordsworth, grew upon me so rapidly, that it was more than seven before I took courage to leave the inn. I had indeed little cause for such trepidation. I was driven to a lovely cottage-like building, almost hidden by a profusion of roses and ivy; and a most benignant-looking old man greeted me in the porch: this was Mr. Wordsworth himself; and when I tell you that, having rather a large party of visiters in the house, he led me to a room apart from them, and brought in his family by degrees, I am sure that little trait will give you an idea of considerate kindness which you will both like and appreciate. In half an hour I felt myself as much at ease with him as I had been with Sir Walter Scott in half a day. I laughed to find myself saying, on the occasion of some little domestic occurrence, 'Mr. Wordsworth, how *could* you be so giddy?' He has, undeniably, a lurking love of mischief, and would not, I think, be half so safely intrusted with the tied-up bag of winds as Mr. —— insisted that Dr. Channing might be. There is an almost patriarchal simplicity, an absence of all pretension, about him, which I know you would like; all is free, unstudied —'the river winding at its own sweet will'—in his manner and conversation there is more of impulse about them than I had expected, but in other respects I see much that I should have looked for in the poet of meditative life: frequently his head droops, his eyes half close, and he seems buried in quiet depths of thought. I have passed a delightful morning to-day in walking with him about his own richly shaded grounds, and hearing him speak of the old English writers, particularly Spenser, whom he loves, as he

himself expresses it, for his 'earnestness and devotedness.' It is an *immeasurable* transition from Spenser to ——, but I have been so much amused by Mr. Wordsworth's characterizing her as a '*tumultuous young woman*,'* that I cannot forbear transcribing the expression for the use of my friends. I must not forget to tell you that he not only admired our exploit in crossing the Ulverston sands as a deed of 'derring do,' but as a decided proof of taste; the Lake scenery, he says, is never seen to such advantage as after the passage of what he calls its majestic barrier. Let me write out the passage from Haco, before I quite exhaust my paper: this was certainly the *meaning* we both agreed upon; though I did not recollect your translation sufficiently well to arrange the versification accordingly.

> 'Where is the noble game that will not seek
> A perilous covert, ev'n from wildest rocks,
> In his sore need, when fast the hunter's train
> Press on his panting flight?' "

"Rydal Mount, June 24th, 1830.

"My dear Mr. L——,

"I was on the point of migrating to the land of Lakes when your former letter reached me; I delayed acknowledging it until I had arrived at my place of destination, Mr. Wordsworth's house, where I now am, and where I have just had the pleasure of hearing from you again.—You can scarcely conceive a more beautiful spot than Rydal Mount; my window is completely embowered in ivy and roses, and Winandermere lies gleaming among the hills before it:—what a contrast to the *culinary* about Liverpool! I am charmed with Mr. Wordsworth himself; his manners are distinguished by that frank simplicity which I believe to be ever the characteristic of *real* genius; his conversation perfectly free and unaffected, yet remarkable for power of expression and vivid imagery; when the subject calls for anything like enthusiasm, the poet breaks out frequently and delightfully, and his gentle and affectionate playfulness in the intercourse with all the members of his family, would of itself sufficiently refute Moore's theory in the Life of Byron, with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I have much of his society, as he walks by me while I ride to explore the mountain glens and waterfalls, and he

* This refers to the party alluded to in the last fragments of correspondence in the last chapter.

occasionally repeats passages of his own poems in a deep and thinking tone, which harmonizes well with the spirit of these scenes. . . . . The state of music here is something of the darkest. Rossini, Beethoven, Weber, are names that have never awakened the mountain echoes, *here* at least. And a lady was so charmed the other day with the *originality* of 'Ah perdona,' that with the view, as she said, of obtaining 'a little *new* music,' she instantly, in the innocence of her heart set about transcribing the whole."

"Rydal Mount, June 24, 1830.

"Will you favour me by accepting this copy of the little volume, in the preparation of which I was so greatly indebted to your kindness? I have written your name in it, and in the other two that of Dr. ——, to whom I wish you would present them with my grateful respects. I seem to be writing to you almost from the spirit land; all is here so brightly still, so remote from every-day cares and tumults, that sometimes I can scarcely persuade myself I am not dreaming. It scarcely seems to be 'the light of common day,' that is clothing the woody mountains before me; there is something almost *visionary* in its soft gleams and ever-changing shadows. I am charmed with Mr. Wordsworth, whose kindness to me has quite a soothing influence over my spirits. Oh! what relief, what blessing there is in the feeling of admiration, when it can be freely poured forth! 'There is a daily beauty in his life,' which is in such lovely harmony with his poetry, that I am thankful to have witnessed and *felt* it. He gives me a good deal of his society, reads to me, walks with me, leads my poney when I ride, and I begin to talk with him as with a sort of *paternal* friend. The whole of this morning he kindly passed in reading to me a great deal from Spenser, and afterwards his own 'Laodamia,' my favourite 'Tintern Abbey,' and many of those noble sonnets which you, like myself, enjoy so much. His reading is very peculiar, but, to my ear, delightful; slow, solemn, *earnest* in expression more than any I have ever heard; when he reads or recites in the open air, his deep rich tones seem to proceed from a spirit voice, and belong to the religion of the place; they harmonize so fitly with the thrilling tones of woods and waterfalls. His expressions are often strikingly poetical: 'I would not give up the mists that *spiritualize* our mountains for all the blue

sides of Italy.' Yesterday evening he walked beside me as I rode on a long and lovely mountain-path high above Grasmere lake: I was much interested by his showing me, carved deep into the rock as we passed, the initials of his wife's name inscribed there many years ago by himself, and the dear old man, like 'Old Mortality,' renews them from time to time; I could scarcely help exclaiming '*Esto perpetua!*'"

"Rydal Mount, June 25th, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"The recurrence of the day on which I used so often to write to you, makes me wish to communicate with you again. I seem as if I longed to hear the voice of a 'familiar friend,' amidst the deep stillness of these beautiful scenes. Beautiful as they are, do you know I have not yet seen any thing to my eyes half so lovely as our own Coniston; that first impression of lake scenery will never, I think, be effaced by a brighter. Grasmere, to which I often ride attended by Mr. Wordsworth, is exquisite, but, I scarcely know why, something of sadness seems to overshadow its secluded beauty, whilst all my recollections of Coniston are bright and fresh and joyous. You will be pleased to hear that the more I see of Mr. Wordsworth, the more I admire, and I may almost say, love him. It is delightful to see a life in such perfect harmony with all that his writings express, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home!' You may remember how much I disliked, and I think you agreed with me in reprobating, that shallow theory of Mr. Moore's with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I was speaking of it yesterday to Mr. Wordsworth, and was pleased by his remark, 'It is not because they *possess* genius that they make unhappy homes, but because they do not possess genius *enough*; a higher order of mind would enable them to see and feel all the beauty of domestic ties.' He has himself been singularly fortunate in long years of almost untroubled domestic peace and union.

"How much I was amused yesterday, by a sudden burst of indignation in Mr. Wordsworth, which would have enchanted ———. We were sitting on a bank overlooking

Rydal Lake, and speaking of Burns. I said, 'Mr. Wordsworth, do you not think his war ode 'Scots who hae wi' Wallace bled,' has been a good deal overrated? especially by Mr. Carlyle, who calls it the noblest lyric in the language?' 'I am delighted to hear you ask the question,' was his reply, 'overrated!—trash!—stuff! miserable inanity! without a thought—without an image!' &c. &c. &c. then he recited the piece in a tone of unutterable scorn; and concluded with a *Da Capo* of 'wretched stuff!' I rode past De Quincy's cottage the other evening.

"I hope you will write *very* soon. I really long for a 'voice from home.'"

"Rydal Mount, July 2d, 1830.

"Will you not like to think of me at that lovely little Dove's Nest which we both of us admired so much from the lake, my dear Mr. ——? I was agreeably surprised to find it a lodging-house, and have taken apartments there for a fortnight; probably I may remain longer, but I almost fear that its *deep* though beautiful seclusion, would, for any length of time, be too much for one upon whom solitude bears back so many subjects of melancholy thought. If you were but near enough to come and pass the evenings with me! How I should enjoy making your coffee at the window, which looks forth to that glorious lake with all its glancing sails and woody islets! But I am sure your thoughts will sometimes be with me, when you can free them from the turmoil of your busy life, and the *resounding* streets, and I hope you will write to me very often. You may be quite sure that I always write to you from impulse, and the strong wish of communion rendered even stronger to *my* nature by beautiful scenery and new impressions. I am indeed but *too* dependent on those to whom my mind has linked itself. Pray thank Dr. —— for his very kind letter, which I will answer as soon as I am established at my Dove's Nest, where I shall have more time for writing. As you have so particularly requested me to tell you about my health, I must own that I am not quite so well as I was at the beginning of my sojourn here:—I was nearly thrown from a spirited horse I was riding the other evening, and have been as tremulous as an aspen leaf ever since. Mr. Wordsworth, I think, was more alarmed than myself, for

by the time he came up to me, though I had with some difficulty kept my seat, my voice was completely gone, and I was unable to speak for many minutes. However, I continue to ride every day, and hope thus to conquer the nervous weakness which the adventure had left. Yesterday I rode round Grasmere and Rydal Lake; it was a glorious evening, and the imaged heaven in the waters more completely *filled* my mind even to overflowing, than I think any object in nature ever did before: I quite longed for you: we should have stood in silence before the magnificent vision for an hour, as it flushed and faded, and darkened at last into the deep sky of a summer night. I thought of the scriptural expression, 'A sea of glass mingled with fire;' no other words are fervid enough to convey the least impression of what lay burning before me."

"Dove Nest, near Ambleside, July 6th, 1830.

"My dear ———,

"I think I was never so glad to hear from you, as when Claude and Henry brought me your kind and welcome letter on Saturday. I had been thinking of you so frequently since my arrival here, and so earnestly wishing to tell you all my feelings on taking possession of this lovely little bower, that I almost seemed, by the strong power of mind, to have brought you near; and it really was like hearing the pleasant voice of a dear friend to receive your letter just *then*. How *shall* I tell you of all the loveliness by which I am surrounded, of all the soothing and holy influence it seems shedding down into my inmost heart? I have sometimes feared within the last two years, that the effect of suffering and adulation, and feelings too highly wrought, and too severely tried, would have been to dry up within me the fountains of such pure and simple enjoyment; but *now* I know that

'Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.'—

I can think of nothing but what is pure, and true, and kind, and my eyes are filled with grateful tears even whilst I am writing all this to you—to *you*, because I know you will understand me. I want nothing here but the spirit of a friend to answer the feelings of my own—*that* is indeed a want which throws some shade of sadness over this beautiful world, but I feel it far more bitterly amidst the world of

society, where I find so many things to shrink from. Yet I think I never desired to talk to you so much and so often, as since I came here. I must try to describe my little nest, since I cannot call spirits from the 'vasty lake' to bring you hither through the air. The house was originally meant for a small villa, though it has long since passed into the hands of farmers, and there is in consequence an air of neglect about the little domain, which does not at all approach desolation, and yet gives it something of touching interest. You see every where traces of love and care beginning to be effaced: rose-trees spreading into wildness; laurels darkening the windows, with too luxuriant branches; and I cannot help saying to myself—'perhaps some heart like my own in its feelings and sufferings has here sought refuge and found repose.' The ground is laid out in rather an antiquated style, which, now that nature is beginning to reclaim it from art, I do not at all dislike: there is a little grassy terrace immediately under the window, descending to a small court, with a circular grass plot, on which grows one tall white rose-tree; you cannot imagine how I delight in that fair, solitary, neglected looking tree. I am writing to you from an old-fashioned alcove in the little garden round which the sweet-briar and moss rose-tree have completely run wild, and I look down from it upon lovely Winandermere, which seems at this moment even like another sky, so truly is every summer cloud and tint of azure pictured in its transparent mirror. It is quite a place in which to hear Mr. Wordsworth read poetry. Have I ever told you how much his reading and recitations have delighted me? His voice has something quite *breeze-like* in the soft gradationof its swells and falls. How I wish you could have heard it a few evenings since! We had just returned from riding through the deep valley of Grasmere, and were talking of different natural sounds, which in the stillness of the evening had struck my imagination. 'Perhaps,' I said 'there may be still deeper and richer music pervading all nature than any which we are permitted to hear!' He answered by reciting those glorious lines of Milton's—

> 'Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
> Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep,' &c.

And his tones of solemn earnestness, sinking, almost *dying* away into a *murmur* of veneration, as if the passage were breathed forth from the heart, I shall never forget;

'the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer,' while those high thoughts were uttered. I have been writing to you in a most child-like and confiding spirit, shall I not have tired you out with my details?—no, I will not think so.

"I do not feel as if I had said *half* that was in my mind to say; I should have thanked you sooner for all those spirit stirring tales from the early annals of England; they will afford me 'food for thought' some future day, and I have always pleasure in knowing what reading interests you; but I think my spirit is too much *lulled* by these sweet scenes to breathe one song of sword and speer until I have bid Winandermere farewell: Ned Bolton* was the last hero by whose exploits I have been in the least moved. My boys are so happy here, I wish you could see them. Henry out with his fishing-rod, and Charles sketching, and Claude climbing the hill above the Nest. I cannot follow, for I have not strength yet, but I think in feeling I am more a child than any of them.

"Now I *must* say good-by, and reserve many things till I write again, which will be soon.

"Ever believe me,

"Most truly yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

The following postscript to one of the letters written from Dove Nest may here be inserted; its subject furnishes a pleasant contrast to the vivacity of the next extract.

"I must tell you how very much Mr. Wordsworth was pleased with 'The St. Cecilia,' particularly with the *nightingale* verse."

The lines in question (aftewards published among the "National Lyrics") were written to illustrate a picture of St. Cecilia with attendant angels, by Andrea Celesti. Mrs. Hemans had been much struck with the mingled calmness and inspiration which her apprehensive imagination had discovered, and greatly enhanced, in the countenance of the principal figure. She always loved to trace an under-

* The pirate-hero of one of Mr. Kennedy's spirited ballads.

current of sadness, some dim intimation of a world unseen and spiritual, even in the gayest and most careless music, and the *serenity* of the countenance of St. Cecilia had strongly impressed her mind by its contrast with so favourite a superstition; the impression gave its color to her poem. —The second verse of the following was Mr. Wordsworth's favourite.

"Say, by what strain, through cloudless ether swelling,
Thou hast drawn down those wanderers from the skies?
Bright guests! even such as left of yore their dwelling
For the deep cedar shades of Paradise.

"What strain?—Oh! not the nightingale's when showering
Her own heart's life-drops on the burning lay—
She stirs the young woods in their time of flowering,
And pours her strength, but not her grief, away.

"And not the exile's," &c. &c.

. . . . . .

"But thou!—the spirit which at eve is filling
All the hush'd air, and reverential sky,
Founts, leaves, and flowers, with solemn rapture thrilling,
This is the soul of *thy* rich harmony.

"This bears up high those breathings of devotion,
Wherein the currents of thy heart gush free;
Therefore no world of sad and vain emotion,
Is the dream-haunted music-land for *thee*!"

"Dove Nest.

"My dear ———,

"I have too long left unacknowledged your welcome letter, but the wicked world does so continue to persecute me with notes, and parcels, and despatches, that, even *here*, I cannot find half the leisure you would imagine. Yesterday I had three visiting-cards—upon which I look with a fearful and boding eye—left at the house, whilst I was sitting, in the innocence of my heart, thinking no harm, by the side of the lake. Imagine visiting-cards at Dove's Nest! Robinson Crusoe's dismay at seeing the print of the man's foot in the sand could have been nothing, absolutely nothing,

to mine, when these evil tokens of 'young ladies with pink parasols' met my distracted sight, on my return from the shore. *En revanche*, however, I have just received the most exquisite letter ever indited by the pen of man, from a young American, who being an inhabitant of No. ——, ——, is certainly not likely to trouble me with anything more than his 'spiritual attachment,' as Mr. —— of —— is pleased to call it. He, that is, my American, must certainly not be the 'walking-stick,' but the very *leaping-pole* of friendship. Pray read, mark, learn, and promulgate for the benefit of the family, the following delectable passage. 'How often have I sung some touching stanza of your own, as I rode on horseback of a Saturday evening, from the village academy to my house a little distance out of town; and saw through the waving cedars and pines, the bark roof and the open door of some pleasant wigwam, where the young comely maidens were making their curious baskets, or mocasins, or wampum-belts, and singing their 'To-gas-a-wana, or evening song!' How often have I murmured 'Bring flowers,' or the 'Voice of Spring,' as thus I have pondered along! How often have I stood on the shore of the Cayuga, the Seneca, the Oneida, and the Skeneateles, and called to mind the sweetness of your strains!' I see you are enchanted, my dear ——, but this is not all: 'the lowliest of my admirers,' as the amaible youth entitles himself, begs permission to be for once my '*cordonnier*,' and is about to send me a pair of Indian *mocasins*, with my 'illustrious name interwoven in the buckskin of which they are composed, with wampum beads.' If I receive this precious gift before I return to Liverpool, I shall positively make my appearence, *en squaw*, the very first evening I come to —— street; and pray tell Dr. ——, that with these mocasins, and *a blanket to correspond*, I shall certainly be able to defy all the rigours of the ensuing winter. I am much disappointed to find that there is no prospect of your visiting this lovely country. I am sure that nothing would do —— so much good as a brief return to its glorious scenery; there is balm in the very *stillness* of the spot I have chosen. The 'majestic silence' of these lakes, perfectly soundless and waveless as they are, except when troubled by the wind, is to me most impressive. O what a poor thing is society in the presence of skies and waters and everlasting hills! You may be sure I do not allude to the dear intercourse of friend with friend—that would be dearer tenfold—more precious, more

occasionally repeats passages of his own poems in a deep and thinking tone, which harmonizes well with the spirit of these scenes. . . . . The state of music here is something of the darkest. Rossini, Beethoven, Weber, are names that have never awakened the mountain echoes, *here* at least. And a lady was so charmed the other day with the *originality* of 'Ah perdona,' that with the view, as she said, of obtaining 'a little *new* music,' she instantly, in the innocence of her heart set about transcribing the whole."

"Rydal Mount, June 24, 1830.

"Will you favour me by accepting this copy of the little volume, in the preparation of which I was so greatly indebted to your kindness? I have written your name in it, and in the other two that of Dr. ——, to whom I wish you would present them with my grateful respects. I seem to be writing to you almost from the spirit land; all is here so brightly still, so remote from every-day cares and tumults, that sometimes I can scarcely persuade myself I am not dreaming. It scarcely seems to be 'the light of common day,' that is clothing the woody mountains before me; there is something almost *visionary* in its soft gleams and ever-changing shadows. I am charmed with Mr. Wordsworth, whose kindness to me has quite a soothing influence over my spirits. Oh! what relief, what blessing there is in the feeling of admiration, when it can be freely poured forth! 'There is a daily beauty in his life,' which is in such lovely harmony with his poetry, that I am thankful to have witnessed and *felt* it. He gives me a good deal of his society, reads to me, walks with me, leads my poney when I ride, and I begin to talk with him as with a sort of *paternal* friend. The whole of this morning he kindly passed in reading to me a great deal from Spenser, and afterwards his own 'Laodamia,' my favourite 'Tintern Abbey,' and many of those noble sonnets which you, like myself, enjoy so much. His reading is very peculiar, but, to my ear, delightful; slow, solemn, *earnest* in expression more than any I have ever heard; when he reads or recites in the open air, his deep rich tones seem to proceed from a spirit voice, and belong to the religion of the place; they harmonize so fitly with the thrilling tones of woods and waterfalls. His expressions are often strikingly poetical: 'I would not give up the mists that *spiritualize* our mountains for all the blue

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"Rydal Mount, June 25th, 1830.

"My dear Sir,

"The recurrence of the day on which I used so often to write to you, makes me wish to communicate with you again. I seem as if I longed to hear the voice of a 'familiar friend,' amidst the deep stillness of these beautiful scenes. Beautiful as they are, do you know I have not yet seen any thing to my eyes half so lovely as our own Coniston; that first impression of lake scenery will never, I think, be effaced by a brighter. Grasmere, to which I often ride attended by Mr. Wordsworth, is exquisite, but, I scarcely know why, something of sadness seems to overshadow its secluded beauty, whilst all my recollections of Coniston are bright and fresh and joyous. You will be pleased to hear that the more I see of Mr. Wordsworth, the more I admire, and I may almost say, love him. It is delightful to see a life in such perfect harmony with all that his writings express, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home!' You may remember how much I disliked, and I think you agreed with me in reprobating, that shallow theory of Mr. Moore's with regard to the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness. I was speaking of it yesterday to Mr. Wordsworth, and was pleased by his remark, 'It is not because they *possess* genius that they make unhappy homes, but because they do not possess genius *enough;* a higher order of mind would enable them to see and feel all the beauty of domestic ties.' He has himself been singularly fortunate in long years of almost untroubled domestic peace and union.

"How much I was amused yesterday, by a sudden burst of indignation in Mr. Wordsworth, which would have enchanted ———. We were sitting on a bank overlooking

make me up a parcel before long; Mr. Wordsworth wants to read a little of Schiller with me, and he is not to be had at Ambleside; and I want some chocolate—and *that* cannot be had at Ambleside—and a black silk spencer, after divers 'moving accidents by field and flood,' wants a *rifacciamento* —neither can that be had at the all-needing Ambleside; but I must write the affecting particulars to ——."

Dove Nest.

* "My dear ——,

"I must frankly own that it is my necessities which impel me so soon to address you again. From the various dilapidations which my wardrobe has endured since I came into this country, I am daily assuming more and more the appearance of 'a decayed gentlewoman;' and if you could only behold me in a certain black gown, which came with me here in all the freshness of youth, your tender heart would be melted into tearful compassion. The ebony bloom of the said dress is departed for ever; the waters of Winandermere, (thrown up by oars in unskilful hands,) have splashed and dashed over it, the rains of Rydal have soaked it, the winds from Helmcrag have wrinkled it, and it is altogether somewhat in the state of

> 'Violets plucked, which sweetest showers,
> May ne'er make grow again.'

Three yards of black silk, however, will, I believe, restore me to respectability of appearance, ... If —— will add a supply of chocolate, without which there is no getting through the fatigue of existence for me—and if —— or your brother —— will also send me a volume or two of Schiller—not the plays, but the poems—to read with Mr. Wordsworth, I shall then have a complete brown-paper full of happiness. Imagine, my dear ——, a bridal present made by Mr. Wordsworth, to a young lady in whom he is much interested—a poet's daughter, too! You will be thinking of a brooch in the shape of a lyre, or a butterfly-shaded aigrette, or a forget-me-not ring or some such 'small gear'—nothing of the sort, but a good, handsome, substantial, useful looking pair of scales, to hang up in her store-room! 'For you must be aware, my dear Mrs. Hemans,' said he to me very gravely, 'how necessary it is occasionally for every lady to see things weighed herself.' '*Poveretta me!* I looked as *good as I*

could, and, happily for me, the poetic eyes are not very clear-sighted, so that I believe no suspicion derogatory to my notability of character, has yet flashed upon the mighty master's mind: indeed I told him that I looked upon scales as particularly graceful things, and had great thoughts of having my picture taken with a pair in my hand." . . . .

Dove Nest Cottage, Ambleside, July 20th, 1830.

"My dear Mr. L——,

"A letter which I received this morning from Liverpool mentions your having returned home, and I will therefore no longer delay writing to you, as you may perhaps wish to know my present address. I fear you have given up your intention of visiting the Lakes, as your last letter made no mention of it. The weather is indeed any thing but alluring, though there are few, even of the most lowering days *here*, among which one cannot get out of doors *in a parenthesis*, such as the *culinary regions* where you now are very seldom afford. I am anxious to know whether you received my little volume, which was sent for you to the Athenæum: very little of its contents would be new to you, though the arrangement of the whole might, I hope, afford you some pleasure. You were quite right about the name of '*my Cid*,' as the old Spanish chroniclers call him: it is Diaz, and not *Diar*, and he is a personage for whom I have so much respect, that it would have grieved me to see his 'style and title' falsified. I remained at Mr. Wordsworth's rather more than a fortnight, and then came to my present residence, a lonely, but beautifully situated cottage on the banks of Winandermere. I am so much delighted with the spot, that I scarcely know how I shall leave it. The situation is one of the deepest retirement; but the bright lake before me, with all its fairy barks and sails, glancing like 'things of life' over its blue water, prevents the solitude from being overshadowed by anything like sadness. I contrive to see Mr. Wordsworth frequently, but am little disturbed by other visiters: only the other evening, just as I was about to go forth upon the lake a card was brought to me. —— Think of my being found out by American tourists in Dove's Nest! 'I wish ——, and ——, and ——, (for they were *all* impending over me,) where in the arms of Helvellyn and Catchedicam!' exclaimed I most irreverently; but, however, they brought cre-

dentials I could not but acknowledge. The young ladies, as I feared, brought an Album concealed in their shawls, and it was levelled at me like a pocket-pistol before all was over. When you see Mrs. ——, will you tell her that I have just had a very kind and pleasant letter from Lady Dacre: tell her, also, that I am going to read some of Schiller with Mr. Wordsworth. I know that she will understand that high enjoyment."

"Dove Nest, Thursday.

"My dear Mr ——,

"Having received ——'s parcel in safety, I have now two kind letters to thank you for. . . . Will you tell ——, with my best remembrance, that Mr. Wordsworth thinks he shall be quite able to read the small edition of Schiller: he is now gone for a few days to his friend Lord Lowther's; but I hope, on his return, to read with him some of my own *first loves* in Schiller—'The Song of the Bell,' 'Cassandra,' or 'Thekla's Spirit voice,' with none of which he is acquainted. Indeed, I think he is inclined to undervalue German literature from not knowing its best and purest masterpieces. 'Goethe's writings cannot live,' he one day said to me, 'because *they are not holy*?' I found that he had unfortunately adopted this opinion from an attempt to read Wilhelm Meister, which had inspired him with irrepressible disgust. However, I shall try to bring him into a better way of thinking, if only out of my own deep love for what has been to me a source of intellectual joy so cheering and elevating. I did not accomplish my visit to Coniston last Saturday; the 'cloud land' was too impervious to be entered. . . . Is it not very strange, and hateful, and wearisful, that wherever I go, some odd old creature is sure to fall in love with me just out of spite? I am quite sure that if I went to Preston, *Miss* —— (do you remember that long, thin, *deadly-looking* mansion with her name on the door?) would attach herself to me with the adhesive pertinacity of the Old Man of the Sea. This is really a part of my miseries which I do not think you have ever taken into proper consideration, or sympathised with as the case deserves. If you would but pity me enough, you cannot imagine how consolatory I should find it. . . . .

"You would scarcely know Charles if you were to see him now; he has broken forth into almost *tameless* vivacity.

He wants very much to write to you, but I thought, as you hear from me so often, it would not be necessary to impose upon you so juvenile a correspondent. I was greatly shocked a few days since to hear of the death of Mrs. —— at Florence. It seemed quite suddenly, in one of those spasms of the heart which the physicians had predicted would end fatally; and Mr. —— has returned *alone* to England. Just at this time last year I was with them, witnessing all their preparations for their Italian journey. I remember his being very much affected by a verse which I played and sung—

'She faded 'midst Italian flowers,
The last of that bright band.'

I have got into a shocking habit, for which you will not thank me, of crossing my letters; but I always fancy I have so much to say when I write to you, that the paper is never half long enough. Will you tell ——— that I shall certainly make her first lady of the wardrobe, for her skill in choosing silks, whenever my long expected accession to the throne takes place. I am going this evening, for two or three days, to Grasmere; but if I do not fall into Dungeon Ghyll, which I am to visit thence, I shall be back at Dove's Nest on Sunday.

"Ever faithfully yours,
"FELICIA HEMANS."

After having remained for some weeks at Dove Nest, Mrs. Hemans was induced, by pressing invitations, again to visit Scotland. Of this second northern journey, I have but few memorials: the greater part of her time was spent at Milburn Tower, the seat of her venerable friend, Sir Robert Liston,—whence the following fragments were written.

"Mr. Jeffrey called upon me yesterday, and I was unluckily gone to Edinburgh, but we dine with him on Friday. I anticipate much enjoyment from his brilliance, but do hope he will not quiz Wordsworth.* I could not bear *that* after

* The following extract from a subsequent letter refers to the visit in question.

"We passed a delightful day, our host being in the full glow of conversation, unequalled in rapid brilliance of imagery and illustra-

the affectionate interest shown me by the latter, and continued to the very last moment of my stay in the neighbourhood. I rejoice that you have been so much pleased with Miss Kemble, it is so delightful to submit one's mind, fully, entirely to the spell of genius. I never could understand the *pleasure* of criticising. I have one thing more to say before I conclude. You will probably, in consequence of my visit to Scotland, hear reports with regard to a change of residence for me, be assured that feeling towards you as towards a most valued friend, I should communicate to you any change of importance on which I had resolved, and therefore believe nothing that you do not hear from myself.

"Most truly yours,

"F. HEMANS."

"Imagine my dismay on visiting Mr. Fletcher's sculpture-room, on beholding at least *six Mrs. Hemans*, placed as if to greet me in every direction. There is something absolutely frightful in this multiplication of one's self to *infinity*. *Apropos de bottes*, Mr Fletcher is anxious to know whether his '*images*,' as Mr. ———'s servants call them, are well placed in the Liverpool exhibition, and I promised that I would ask you to call there some day and judge for him. Will you write and let me know? Oh how I wish you could be here! how you would love this fair place with all its gorgeous flowers and leafy stillness!"

It was during this visit at Milburn Tower, that Mrs. Hemans formed a friendship, which led her to visit Dublin on her way homeward; and ultimately to decide on removing her residence from Wavertree to that city. The change, it will be seen, was, on the whole, beneficial. She was sure to attach to herself kind and energetic friends wherever she went: and no residence in a town could be more thoroughly exhausting and unprofitable than was hers at Wavertree—a

tion, (something like Paganini's *lightning* passages:) yet so easy, playful, and natural, that its brightness never seemed in the least fatiguing, which that of almost all the other *sparkling* people I ever met, at some time or other appeared to me."

village, but possessing not one single privilege or advantage which belongs to the country. Before, however, this step was finally arranged, Mrs. Hemans passed over into Wales, —the last time she ever visited the home of her youth,—to consult her brother upon the subject: and it was late in the year ere she returned to us, with the saddening news that her departure from our neighbourhood was determined upon.

CHAPTER XIII.

Fragments of Correspondence—Journey through Anglesey—Aurora Borealis—Light-house—Passage from Mr. Bowdler's writings—Monument by Thorwaldsen—Personification in art and poetry—Goethe—Rogers' "Italy"—Titian's portraits—Longevity of artists—Lessons in music—Evening spent with a celebrated linguist—Mr. Roscoe—Mr. Hare's pamphlets—Gibbon's "Sappho"—Character of Mrs. Hemans in the "Athenæum"—Life and Letters of Weber—the repose of old portraits—Young's Hamlet—The Cyclops proved light-houses—Howitt's "Book of the Seasons"—Poetical tributes—Wandering female singer—Wearisome dinner-party—Mrs. Hemans' pleasure in composing melodies—"Prayer at Sea after Battle"—Preparations for her departure from England—Shelley's poems—Vulgar patronage—Collection of drawings—"Tancredi"—Discontinuance of pensions from the Royal Society to Literature.

The winter which followed this long absence, so important in its consequences to the happiness of the few remaining years of Mrs. Hemans' life, on the whole, passed over rather sadly. The state of a person about to make any change in life, be it only a change of residence, must always be one of unsettlement and restraint: the mind is strangely divided between what it is giving up, and what it is hoping to gain; and it is difficult to sit down and undisturbedly enjoy the passing hours when they are felt to be last hours. It is true that Mrs. Hemans constantly spoke of frequent visits to England; that she fancied the distance between Liverpool and Dublin was not so great as finally to close, though it might interrupt, her intercourse with those who, for so long a time, had been almost her daily companions;—but the old communion was broken, and we could not but feel, that though she still remained among us, as gracious, as affectionate as ever, her thoughts were hovering round the new home, in which she looked to find the repose and the shelter which had been denied to her in our busy, commercial neighbourhood. In procuring the advantages of education for her sons, she expected, and with reason, to be more fortunate than she had been in Liverpool.

Of the fragments of correspondence which follow, the larger portion were addressed to one of her new Irish friends. They require no further prefatory remark.

"I thought Anglesey, through which I travelled the next day, without exception, the most dreary, *culinary-looking* land of prose I ever beheld. I strove in vain to conjure up the ghost of a Druid, or even of a tree, on its wide mountainous plains, which, I really think, Nature must have produced to *rest herself* after the strong excitement of composing the Caernarvonshire hills. But I cannot tell you how much I wanted to express my feelings when at last that bold mountain-chain rose upon me, in all its grandeur, with the crowning Snowdon, (very superior, I assure you, in 'shape and feature,' to our friend Ben Lomond,) maintaining his 'pride of place' above the whole ridge. And the Menai bridge, which I thought I should scarcely have noticed in the presence of those glorious heights, really seems, from its magnificence, a native feature of the scene, and nobly asserts the pre-eminence of *mind* above all other things. I could scarcely have conceived such a union of strength and grace; and its chain-work is so airy in appearance, that to drive along it seems almost like passing through the trellis of a bower; it is quite startling to look down from anything which looks so fragile to the immense depth below. . . . My journey lay along the sea-shore rather late at night, and I was surprised by quite a splendid vision of the northern lights, on the very spot where I had once, and once only, before seen them in early childhood. They shot up like slender pillars of white light, with a sort of arrowy motion, from a dark cloud above the sea; their colour varied, in ascending, from that of silver to a faint orange, and then a very delicate green: and sometimes the motion was changed, and they chased each other *along* the edge of a cloud, with a dazzling brightness and rapidity. I was almost startled by seeing them *there* again: and after so long an interval of thoughts and years, it was like the effect produced by a sudden burst of familiar and yet long-forgotten music."

"I did not observe any object of interest on my voyage from Wales, excepting a new beacon at the extremity of the Liverpool Rock, and which I thought a good deal like the pictures of Eddystone light-house. There was something to me particularly stern and solemn in its appearance, as it rose darkly against a very wild sky, like a 'pillar of cloud' with a capital of deep-coloured fire; but perhaps the gloom and stormy effect of the evening might have very much aided the impression left upon my fancy."

"Your opinion of the 'Spirit's Return' has given me particular pleasure, because I prefer that poem to anything else I have written: but if there be, as my friends say, a greater power in it than I had before evinced, I paid dearly for the discovery, and it almost made me tremble as I sounded 'the deep places' of my soul."

"I have just been much struck with this* passage, from a work of the late John Bowdler's: I cannot help, in some measure, applying it to myself;—'Could the veil which now separates us from futurity be drawn aside, and those regions of everlasting happiness and sorrow which strike so faintly on the imagination be presented fully to our eyes, it would occasion, I doubt not, a sudden and strange revolution in our estimate of things. Many are the distresses for which we now weep in suffering or sympathy, that would awaken us to songs of thanksgiving; many the dispensations which now seem dreary and inexplicable, that would fill our adoring hearts with thanksgiving and joy.'"

"Truly, in this capital to the land of Prose, there is not much to gratify a feeling for the beautiful; but I should have liked you to have been with me a few days since, when I went to visit a monument by Thorwaldsen, lately arrived here. It represents a dying female, supported by her husband, who is bending over her. Nothing can be more admirable than the perfect *abandon* of her figure, the utter, desolate helplessness of the sinking head and hands, so true and yet so graceful: it is like looking at a broken flower. But, unfortunately, the sculptor has thought proper to introduce a *man with wings* and an hour glass, at the foot of the couch, looking not one bit more ideal than the man without wings at the head. Now I never could, in my severest illness and most visionary state of mind, imagine either Time or Eternity entering my room with the doctor or one of my brothers, and standing at my bed-side: and I heartily wish that some skilful exorcist would banish these evil genii from the realms of painting and sculpture altogether, and lay them quietly, with other goblins, at the bottom of the Red Sea." . . . .

* I cannot but point to this passage as indicating the first dawning of that healthier and loftier state of mind, to which Mrs. Hemans rose during the few last years of her life. She had always been submissive to the vicissitudes of her lot: but she had yet to learn to contemplate them with serenity.

Mrs. Heman's dislike to all allegorical personification was great. I hardly remember, even in her very earliest poems, —written at the time when, paradoxical as it may seem, the most artificial forms and images are most in request—a single instance of her having recourse to the Muses, or the Graces, or the Virtues, or to any of the established divinities. In another letter, written about this time, she gaily says, "I quite agree with you as to personification in poetry. I would send them all, from the 'Nymph with placid eye,' even to 'Inoculation, heavenly maid,' along with the marble Times and Eternities, down the Red Sea, for ever and a day."

The next note, it will be seen, refers to the same subject.

"My dear ———,

"I was very remiss in not sooner acknowledging the arrival of the little parcel duly conveyed by Claude, and thus causing you so much additional trouble; but I came home late and tired on Friday evening, which prevented my writing, and I had a vague idea I should see some of you on Sunday.

"I went with Mrs. —— to town the other day, and found she was going to visit Thorwaldsen's work. I was sorry to relinquish the idea of seeing it with you, but its beauty, truth, and simplicity charmed me greatly. The only thing I disliked was the *man with wings*, whom I thought very inferior to the *man without them*, on the other side of the monument; but the perfect *abandon* of the dying figure is admirable. I think the subject you suggested for sculpture, though a very noble one, would rather want some central point, something for the eye and mind to rally round at once. What can we have for the principal figure? We must decide upon this point when next we meet, which I hope to be very soon. Poor Goethe! how sad to think that so calmly bright a career should have so stormy a close! It will be almost like parting with a familiar face to know that he is indeed gone. I have read the passage to which you refer in 'Carlyle,' and mentioned it to my informant, on the subject of infidelity; but no argument could pierce through the thick mantle of self-complacency in which he had been pleased to wrap himself." . . .

The prospect of Goethe's death was a thing deeply to affect one who valued his writings with such entire and reverential sincerity as Mrs. Hemans. A few months previous

to this time, she had collected the best of her poems, with the intention of offering them to the sage of Weimar: some chance or misadventure, however, prevented their reaching their destination.

. . . . "Have you seen Rogers' 'Italy,' with its exquisite embellishments? The whole book seems to me quite a triumph of art and taste: some of Turner's Italian scenes, with their moon-lit vestibules and pillared arcades, the shadows of which seem almost trembling on the ground as you look at them, really might be fit representations of Armida's enchanted gardens: and there is one view of the temples of Pæstum, standing in their severe and lonely grandeur on the shore, and lit up by a flash of lightning, which brought to my mind those lines of Byron,

> ——'As I gazed, the place
> Became Religion, and the heart run o'er
> With silent worship of the great of old.'"

. . . . "I have not yet read Northcote's Life of Titian, but I was much struck with a passage I lately saw quoted from it, relating to that piercing intellectual *eagle-look* which I have so often remarked in Titian's portraits. 'It is the intense personal character,' Northcote says, 'which gives the superiority to those portraits over all others, and stamps them with a living and permanent interest. Whenever you turn to look at them, they appear to be looking at you. There seems to be some question pending between you, as if an intimate friend or an inveterate foe were in the room with you. They exert a kind of fascinating power, and there is that exact resemblance in individual nature which is always new and always interesting.' I suppose it was a feeling of this kind which made Fuseli exclaim on seeing Titian's picture of Paul the Third with his two nephews, 'that is history!'"

. . . . "The account which you sent me of the longevity of artists, (a privliege which I, at least, am far from envying them,) seemed confirmed or rather accounted for, in

some degree, by a paper I was reading on the same day. It is written with great enthusiasm, on the 'Pleasures of Painting,' and the author (Hazlitt, I believe) describes the studies of the artist as a kind of sanctuary, a 'city of refuge,' from worldly strife, envy and littleness; and his communion with nature as sufficient to fill the void, and satisfy all the cravings of heart and soul. I wonder if this indeed *can* be; I should like to go by night with a magician to the Coliseum, (as Benvenuto Cellini did,) and call up the spirits of those mighty Italian artists, and make them all tell me whether they had been happy; but it would not do to forget, as he also did (have you ever read those strange memoirs of his?) the spells by which the ghosts were laid, as the consequences were extremely disagreeable." . .

. . . . "I am taking lessons in music* from James Z. Herrmann, who comes to me every week, and I should like him as a master exceedingly, were it not that I am sure I give him the *toothache* whenever I play a wrong note, and a sympathising pang immediately shoots through my own compassionate heart. I am learning Pergolesi's noble 'Stabat Mater,' which realizes all that I could *dream* of religious music, and which derives additional interest from its being the last work in which the master-spirit breathed forth its enthusiasm."

. . . . "Since I last wrote to you, I have received a visit from a remarkable person, with whom I should like to make you acquainted. . . . . His mind is full, even to overflowing, of intelligence and original thought. It is ——, the distinguished linguist, of whom I shall speak: besides his calling upon me, I also passed an evening in his society, and he talked to me the whole time. I do not

* This gentleman, an artist in the best sense of the word, had already set two of Mrs. Hemans' songs to music of very high order. The "Far away" is one of the most exquisite things we have in the shape of music joined with English words; and the "Dirge at Sea," (though almost placed out of popular reach by the difficulty of its accompaniment,) is a noble and characteristic song to some of her most spirited words. Opportunity and energy are alone wanting to place Mr. Herrman in the first rank of modern composers.

know when I have heard such a flow of varying conversation—odd—original—brilliant—animating;—*any* and *every* one of these epithets might be applied to it; it is like having a *flood of mind* poured out upon you, and that, too, evidently from the strong necessity of setting the current free, and not from any design to shine or overpower. I think I was most interested in his descriptions of Spain, a country where he has lived much, and to which he is strongly attached; he spoke of the songs which seem to *fill* the airs of the south, from the constant improvisation of the people at their work; he described as a remarkable feature of the scenery the little rills and water-courses which were led through the fields and gardens, and even over every low wall, by the Moors of Andalusia, and which yet remain, making the whole country vocal with pleasant sounds of waters; he told me also several striking anecdotes of a bandit chief in Murcia, a sort of Spanish Rob Roy, who has carried on his predatory warfare there for many years, and is so adored by the peasantry, for whose sake he plunders the rich, that it is impossible for the government ever to seize upon him. Some expressions of the old Biscayan language, the *Basque* he called it, which he translated for me, I thought beautifully poetical. The sun is called, in that language, 'that which pours the day,' and the moon, 'the light of the dead.' Well, from Spain he travelled, or rather *shot off*, like Robin Good-fellow, who could

> 'put a girdle round about the earth
> In forty minutes,'

away to Iceland, and told me of his having seen there a MS. recording the visit of an Icelandic prince to the court of our old Saxon king, Athelstan—then to Paris—(not the Iceland prince, but ——)—Brussels—Warsaw—with a sort of '*Open Sesame*,' for the panorama of each court and kingdom. All I had to complain of was, that, being used to a sort of steamboat rapidity, both in bodily and mental movements, ——, while gallantly handing me from one room to another, rushed into a sort of *gallopade* which nearly took my breath away. On mentioning this afterwards to a gentleman who had been of the party, he said, 'What could you expect from a man who has been handing *armed Croats* instead of ladies, from one tent to another? for I believe it is not very long since my ubiquitous friend visited Hungary.' A striking contrast to all this, was a visit I lately paid to old Mr. Roscoe, who may

he considered quite as the father of literature in this part of of the world, though it must be owned that his *child* is at present in anything but a flourishing state. However, he is a delightful old man, with a fine Roman style of head, which he had adorned with a green velvet cap to receive me in, because, as he playfully said, 'he knew I always admired him in it.' Altogether he put me rather in mind of one of Rembrandt's pictures, and as he sat in his quiet study, surrounded by busts and books, and flowers, and with a beautiful cast of Canova's Psyche in the back-ground, I thought that a painter who wished to make old age look touching and venerable, could not have had a better subject. I must, however, confess my ill-behaviour, notwithstanding all the respect with which the scene inspired me. The good old gentleman was showing me a series of engravings from the early Italian masters, and pointed out very gravely the characteristic differences of style, when, all at once, upon his unrolling one which represents Hercules distressingly placed between a dowdy Virtue, and a great fat Pleasure, I was so strongly reminded of a scene which you may remember, that I burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. Mr. Roscoe, a good deal perplexed apparently, asked the cause, and as it was impossible to explain to him the whole mystery, I could only reply, looking as good as I could, 'that it really was impossible to help laughing at Pleasure's *gouty-looking* feet."

. . . . "I send you two pamphlets by Mr. Julius Hare, (a friend of Wordsworth's,) which I think you will admire for their high tone of eloquence; although the subject of one of them, the Defence of Niebuhr,* will probably not interest you much more than it did myself. There are, however, some noble passages, translated from 'Niebuhr's Appeal to the German People,' which almost, as Sir Philip Sidney said of Chevy Chace, 'stir the heart like the sound of a trumpet.' The other work of Mr. Hare's is a sermon called 'the Children of Light.'" . . . .

*At this time Mrs. Hemans only regarded Niebuhr as one of the iconoclasts—as merely a sceptical inquirer into the traditions of antiquity; and it will be remembered with what small complacency or toleration she was prepared to regard any destroyer of the ancient legends in which her imagination took such great delight. The details of the Roman historian's private life, the traits of his character, which have shown to us the simple and amiable man, as well as the severe and laborious scholar, had not then been given to the public.

. . . . . "Since I wrote last, I have been quite confined to the house, but before I caught my last very judicious cold, I went to see an exquisite piece of sculpture, which has been lately sent to this neighborhood from Rome, by Gibson, with whose name as an artist you are most likely familiar. It is a statue of Sappho, representing her at the moment she receives the tidings of Phaon's desertion. I think I prefer it to almost anything I ever saw of Conova's, as it possesses all his delicacy and beauty of form, but is imbued with a far deeper sentiment. There is a sort of *willowy* drooping in the figure which seems to express a weight of unutterable sadness, and one sinking arm holds the lyre so carelessly, that you almost fancy it will drop while you gaze. Altogether, it seems to speak piercingly and sorrowfully of the nothingness of fame, at least to woman. There was a good collection of pictures in the same house, they were almost unaccountably vulgarized in my sight by the presence of the lonely and graceful statue." . . . .

. . . . "I send you a number of the Athenæum, (which seems almost the best literary journal of the day,) for the sake of an account it contains of the Necker family and Madame de Stael, which I think particularly interesting. From the style, I imagine it to be written by a friend of mine, Miss Jewsbury, ... I send another number in which I think you will read with interest a paper, by the sudden appearance of which, with the portentous title 'Felicia Hemans,' I was somewhat startled yesterday morning. Some parts of it are, however, beautifully written, though I hope you will quite enter into my feelings when I utterly disclaim all wish for the post of 'Speaker to the Feminine Literary House of Commons."* . . . .

* In spite of the fault of taste in its very first sentence, here alluded to by Mrs. Hemans, the character in question (from the pen of Miss Jewsbury) is written with great truth, and elegance, and discrimination. It would be superfluous to quote from it, save perhaps, the fanciful simile in its closing paragraph. "She is a permanent accession to the literature of her country; she has strengthened intellectual refinement, and beautified the cause of virtue. The superb creeping-plants of America often fling themselves across the arms of mighty rivers, uniting the opposite banks by a blooming arch: so should every poet do to truth and goodness—so has Felicia Hemans often done, and been, poetically speaking, a bridge of flowers."

. . . . "I have been reading a great deal during all this gloomy winter, and have been charmed lately by an account of the life of my favourite musician, Weber,* with extracts from his letters; the flow of affectionate feeling in these, the love he everywhere manifests of excellence *for its own sake*, the earnestness and truth of heart revealed in all his actions, —these things make up a character, like his own music, of perfect harmony. Is it not delightful, a foundation of gladness to our own hearts, when we are able to love what we *admire?* I shall play the waltz, and these beautiful airs from Der Freischutz, with tenfold pleasure after reading the memoir." . . . .

. . . . "I was much interested a few days ago in looking over some beautiful engravings of antique English portraits. I wonder whether you were ever impressed by what struck me much during an examination of them, the superior character of *repose* by which they are distinguished from the portraits of the present day. I found this, to a certain degree, the predominant trait in every one of them; not anything like *nonchalance* or apathy, but a certain high-minded self-possession, something like what I think the 'Opium Eater' calls 'the brooding of the majestic intellect over all.' I scarcely ever see a trace of this quiet, yet *stately* sweetness in the expression of modern portraits; they all look so eager, so restless, so trying to be *eveille;* I wonder if this is owing to the feverish excitement of the times in which we live, for I should suppose that the world has never been in such a hurry during the whole course of its life before." . .

. . . . "I wish I could be with you to see Young's performance of Hamlet, of all Shakspeare's characters the one which interests me most; I suppose from the never-ending conjectures in which it involves one's mind. Did I ever mention to you Goethe's beautiful remark upon it? He says, that Hamlet's naturally gentle and tender spirit, overwhelmed with its mighty tasks and solemn responsibilities, is like a China vase, fit only for the reception of delicate flowers, but

* In the Foreign Quarterly Review.

in which an oak tree has been planted, the roots of the strong tree expand, and the fair vase is shivered." . . . .

. . . . "I have lately met with an exquisite little book, a work upon the Classics, just published, by Henry Coleridge; it is written with all the fervour and much of the rich imagination and flow of 'words that burn,' which characterize the writings of his celebrated relative." . . .

. . . . "Some Quarterly Reviews have lately been sent to me, one of which contains an article on Byron, by which I have been deeply and sorrowfully impressed; his character, as there portrayed, reminded me of some of those old eastern cities, where travellers constantly find a squalid mud hovel built against the ruins of a gorgeous temple; for, alas! the best part of that fearfully mingled character is but ruin—the wreck of *what might have been.*"

. . . . "I hope you observed in one of the Edinburgh Journals, which I lately sent you on that account, a precious theory of a distinguished engineer, that all the Cyclops of old were *Light Houses.* So I suppose Ulysses only blew out the *lantern*, on a memorable occasion celebrated in Odyssey: but then how the light-house Polyphemus came to run about the shore in that extraordinary manner, and made such a noise that he awoke all his brothers and cousin-beacons along the coast, Mr. Stevenson, the engineer, ought, I think, to have explained." . . . .

Mrs. Hemans writes of Howitt's "Book of the Seasons" as "a little book which has quite charmed me. Do you know, I think that the rumours of political strife and convulsion now ringing round us on all sides, make the spirit long more intensely for the freshness and purity and stillness of nature, and take deeper delight in everything that recalls these lovely images. I am sure I shall forget all sadness, and feel as happy as a child, or a *faun*, when I

can be free again amongst hills and woods. I long for them 'as the hart for the water brooks.'"

. . . . . "I think you will have pleasure in reading the lines which have been lately addressed to me, by Dr. Butler, of Shrewsbury, whose name, as that of an elegant classic scholar, I dare say is familiar to you: I should be sorry not to distinguish such a tribute from . . . . . and other effusions of the Poly-*treacle* school."

Few writers have been approached with so much homage in rhyme as Mrs. Hemans. Most of it was sickly and foolish enough to merit her whimsical epithet; every now and then, however, she was touched by an effusion of pure feeling uttered in graceful verse, which showed all the brighter in contrast with other tributes she received. I believe the verses which she preferred above the rest, were some lines by Mrs. C. G. Godwin, which appeared in one of the annuals: but they could hardly be more heart-warm or welcome, than the poems,—for there are more than one,—addressed to her by her faithful and enthusiastic friend, Miss Jewsbury. A stanza or two from one of these may not be out of place here.

"I know thee but a form of earth,
I know thy wondrous mind,
Linked ever by its tears and mirth
To all of earthly kind;
A flower's thy strength, a child's thy glee,
And all thy moods of heart,
Though restless as the billowy sea,
In beauty come and part.
Thou art of earth in mind and will,
Yet a soul's spell, a vision still,

* * * * *

For thee, in knightly days of old
Would many a lance have rung,
And minstrels at the revel bold
Thy beauty's triumphs sung;
But nobler far thy present meed,
Famed with a mother's fame,
And made to household hearts a need,
Than all Romance may name,
I called thee Rose, I called thee well,
But woman's is thine own sweet spell."

Lays of Leisure Hours.

The next extract is without a date, but may be introduced here as accompanying a short series of letters to the same correspondent.

TO MR. L——.

"My dear Sir,

"I could not but pity the unhappy state in which you must have concluded your last letter, with such a chorus as you describe beneath the windows; in similar circumstances I lately sent out a servant to say that there was a sick lady in the house, who would infallibly expire at the very next *blast* of song, and the bagpipe, (for such was the leader of the barbaric crew,) with a humanity greater than could have been expected from its savage education, immediately departed. One sometimes *does* hear a sweet female voice among a wandering band, and then I think the ideas of desolation and homelessness, with which it is associated, makes the sounds very touching: one such voice came to my ears lately on a very stormy evening: it was uncultivated, as you may suppose, but had a mournful and piercing sweetness, which, mingling as it did with the fitful gusts of the storm, lingered some time in my imagination, and gave rise to the little song* I enclose: if you think it suitable to music it shall be your own, as no one has yet seen it. . . . I dined the other day . . . . . O what a day! what a crew of men! Had I possessed the power of the Enchantress Queen in the Arabian Nights, I should certainly, like her majesty, have taken a little water in my hand, and throwing it by turns in the face of each, have exclaimed, according to the necromantic formula, 'Quit the human form which thou disgracest, and assume that of an ox:' by these desirable means, had they been in my power, some insufferable men would have been got rid of, and

* This was "To a wandering female singer."

* * * * * *

Thou hast wept and thou hast parted,
Thou hast been forsaken long,
Thou hast watched for steps that came not back,
I know it by thy song.

* * * * * *

These lines are published among Mrs. Hemans' Poetical Remains.

some very good oxen (I have no doubt) joined to society.* I long to see your song of the Cid, which I felt assured will be, as Sir Walter Scott somewhere says, 'a strain to turn back the flight;' neither the words of that or the other piece have been promised to any one, and you know I prefer their being accompanied by your music to any other attendance." . . . .

About this time Mrs. Hemans began to derive great pleasure from the discovery of a power which is always more or less possessed by those of a nature as musical as hers; that of composing melodies; or,—to speak critically,—of putting together into a rhythmical form such wandering and unclaimed fragments of music as float through the memory —in fact, the difficulty is always rather to note down such fancies than to originate them.

"The newly-discovered power," she says in a letter, "if such it may be called, to which I have alluded, is that of composing melodies, by which I have been visited in the strangest manner. I have really succeeded in putting down a great many airs to lyric pieces of my own, which, though simple, as you may suppose, yet seem to me to express the character of the words. Mr. L——, to whom I showed them, was so much pleased, that he has kindly arranged them with symphonies and accompaniments, arrayed in which drapery they really make quite an imposing appearance, and I anticipate much pleasure in playing them to you, though I dare say I shall be visited with some nervous terrors when that awful moment arrives. But they have been really a great delight to me, amidst a thousand annoyances, which, as the Latin Grammar sagely observes, 'now to enumerate would be tedious.' I dare say Columbus was not much more rejoiced on discovering the New World, than I, when I had really caught and *caged* my first melody." . .

* In referring to a similar party in another letter, she says quaintly, "I can well conceive your sufferings yesterday; the remembrance of my own on a *nearly* similar occasion, when I was '*bounded on the East*,' as geographers say, by ———, is yet but too vivid." . . . .

TO MR. L——.

"March 5th, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I send you the last song of our set. I remember you wished for a boat-song, and I think this will be susceptible (I am sure that it is a wrong word, but I have no other word at hand) of good musical effect, which you will give so well. I hope you will find no *family likenesses* between *b's* and *P's* and *v's* strong enough to produce a Comedy of Errors. I return your musical Bijou; and feeling myself the happy possessor of two copies of last year's, I beg your acceptance of the one which accompanies your own back. The *stream of melody* has been in such full flow since you were here that I think my being on the eve of departure is rather a fortunate circumstance for you, as otherwise these new inspirations would leave you no prospect of a quiet life. If you have no better engagement, do you think you could come here on Sunday evening? That monster known by the name of the *People* is tormenting me at present to such a degree, that I scarcely know when I shall have another evening. That 'mighty minster's bell,' really sounds so magnificent, that I am *sure* my story of the French *artiste* with the *sauce piquante* and the old slippers, *must* be a case exactly in point. . . A painful suspicion is flashing over my mind that I am beginning to write more illegibly than ever. Before my words, therefore, are lost in a vapour of sublime obscurity,

"Believe me very truly yours,

"F. H."

TO MR. L——.

"March 20th, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I have been making a *noble effort* to put down some of these melodies intelligibly, so as to save you some part of the very irksome task you have so kindly imposed upon yourself. I tried to perform this mighty deed according to the plan you recommended, and shall be very glad if you think I have given some token of dawning reason, and if any of the airs seem to you worth arranging. My own favourite is the Italian girl's hymn, though I cannot make myself at all certain that it does not belong to some injured person whom I have unintentionally plundered. Do tell me if this measure would be intractable for composition.

'A voice of prayer arose
Through evening's bright repose,
When the sea-fight was done:
The sons of England knelt,
With hearts that now could melt,
For on the wave the battle had been won.
Round their tall ship the main
Heaved with a dark red stain;
Caught not from sunset's cloud;
While with the tide swept past
Pennon and shivered mast
Which to the Ocean Queen that day had bowed.'

"I wrote the piece a short time since with the title of 'Prayer at Sea,' and was more pleased with it than I often am with my own performances. I should particularly like to have it set by you, if you do not object to the matter, as otherwise I fear it will be caught and sacrificed by some ignoble hand.

. . . . . .

"A *parenthesis* in my letter occasioned by a visit *three hours* long, has completely driven out of my mind all the rest that I had to say. I am so wearied now, that I conclude an Italian scena—*non posso piu*

"Ever truly yours, &c.

"F. H."

TO MR. L——.

"My dear Sir, "March 22d, 1831.

"I am very glad that you perceive some signs of advancing intellect in my musical MS.—and still more rejoiced that you consent to rescue the lines I now inclose from their impending ruin.

"I have the pleasure to inform you that you have attained a degree of indistinctness positively *sublime* in the name of the day upon which you promised to visit me next. I was, as the Lady Cherudina says in the Heroine, 'terribly ill off for mysteries,' before the arrival of your note; but this deficiency is now happily supplied. Reasoning from analogy instead of wisdom, (is not that a sentence worthy of ——— himself?) I should conclude it to be *Tuesday*, but then it has, if my senses fail me not, a dotted *i*: it seems to have rather too many letters for *Friday*, and into *Wednesday* it cannot be metamorphosed, even on the antiquarian system that 'consonants are changeable at pleasure and vowels go for nothing.' 'The force of nature can no further go;' Therefore, I return the awful hieroglyphic for your inspection, and unless it should be intended to emulate that celebrated hand of Mr. Jef-

frey's, 'which is neither to be read by himself or any one *else*,' I beg for some further light."

"March 31st, 1831.

"My dear Mr. ——,

"I was not able to send you the book yesterday, but it does itself the pleasure of waiting upon you this morning, and is accompanied by a Literary Souvenir, which I beg you to accept and keep 'for ever and a day' in remembrance of me. I also send you a relic which I am sure you will value, a note of Reginald Heber's, with some advice respecting the plot of a tragedy on which I had consulted him: as I have several other papers and letters of his, I can well spare you this, and am sure no one will prize it more.

"I am beginning to be much engaged with the troublesome preparations for my departure. Certainly poetry is a mere 'waif and stray' in this work-day world of ours; when I find my unfortunate self surrounded by trunks and boxes, and packing cases, and bills and accounts, and other such uncouth monsters, I get perfectly bewildered, and wonder into what terra incognita I have been transported. Is it not very disagreeable to awaken out of one's pleasant ideal world, and find that one *must* do things for one's self after all, and notwithstanding all the protestations of a hundred knights and squires who declare that their 'swords shall leap out of their scabbard' at a single word, in one's cause?—Pray are you all superstitious? I am perfectly haunted by an ominous verse of Campbell's—

"'The boat hath left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her;
* But O, too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o'er her.'

and wonder what it bodes me. I am expecting one pleasure in the midst of all these plagues, a visit from my old friend Sir ——, who is coming to see me next week on his way to town. If I have an opportunity, I should like to introduce him to you. He is to dine with the King on the 1st of April, and with me I hope (what a piquant contrast!) on the 6th."

TO MR. L.——.

"April 3rd, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I send you the other volume of Shelley, which I stupidly

* The two last lines have been added to make the quotation clear to those, if such there be, who may not happen to be familiar with the verse it is from "Lord Ullin's Daughter."

forgot to bring yesterday. I think you will admire the earnest eloquence of Mr. Shelley's preface; and the lines written in the Bay of Naples seem to me quite a union of music and picture in poetry. Can anything be more beautiful than

> 'The *lightning* of the noon-tide ocean
> In flashing round me, and I hear
> The music of its measured motion?

I do not think I can leave this *cita dolente* (Wavertree, I mean, for I must remain in Liverpool some days longer) until Saturday next, so that I hope you will have quite time to read all that is interesting in the volume. When I returned home yesterday, I indulged the *incendiary* tastes I had confessed to you, by making a large bonfire of letters. The quantity of sentiment that went to heap the pyre was prodigious, and would, I am sure, have filled 'twelve French romances, neatly gilt.' Did you observe any lurid tinge of conflagration in the skies above——? Amongst these records, half-melancholy, half ludicrous, of past follies and fancies and *dreams*, I found two letters from ———, which I thought had been destroyed long since. I was going to add them to my beacon-fire, but I thought, as curious traits of character, I would show them to you first. Can you conceive any thing so *innately*, so *unutterably* vulgar, as the style of mind they betray? the attempt at patronage, the low-bred enumeration of great names, which, so arranged, almost remind me of the list in the Bath Guide,

> Lord Cram and Lord Vultur,
> Sir Brandish O'Cultur,
> With Martial Carowzer
> And old Lady Mouser.'

I answered these precious documents, certainly without unpoliteness, but with some portion of what Miss Jewsbury calls my '*passive disdain*,' a quality in which she considers me particularly rich. If you will bring them with you to-morrow evening, we will make another conflagration." . . .

TO MR. L———.

April 6th, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I return to you the very interesting collection of Mr. ———'s drawings, which I had great pleasure in looking over yesterday evening. I only regret that there was no names to

them, as I am prevented from particularising those which I most admired; but I recognized Tivoli, and was especially struck with one representing the interior of a church. There is also an exquisite little hermitage buried among trees, where I should like to pass at least a month after all my late fatigues, and hear nothing but the sound of leaves and waters, and now and then some pleasant voice of a friend. I did not quite understand a message which Henry brought me about the dedication or advertisement to those drawings. Did Mr. ——— wish to ask my opinion of it? I am just the reverse of Iago, who calls himself '*nothing if not critical*,' but it seems to me that there is some little awkwardness in the commencement. 'Making the following drawings,' has rather an abrupt sound for the opening of a sentence, has it not? I cannot help feeling interested in Mr. ——— from all I have heard you say of him; and, if you think it would gratify him, I would send you a few lines to be prefixed to this work, in which I should try to express in poetry what I imagine he wishes to convey—that the spirit of the artist was wandering over the sunny fields of Italy, whilst he himself was confined to the bed of sickness. I could not do it very soon, as I am likely to be hurried for some time, but probably he does not wish to publish his work immediately. . . . . I fear I *must* give up the concert, I feel so inexpressibly weary from having to superintend a thousand things which I never thought of in my life before. I will try to have my harp sent to your care in a day or two, and I will also trouble you with the charge of some music-books. I send you a letter of Campbell's for your collection. I must only beg you to keep it for yourself, and not to give it away."

TO MR. L———.

"April 10, 1831.

"I find that I must trouble you with the care of several more Italian books. I was compelled to choose between Tasso and Ariosto, and fear you will hardly approve my preference of the former, but there is much in the story of his sufferings which intensely interests me, and, perhaps, deepens my reverence for his poetry.

"Will you laugh or pity me a little, when I tell you that I absolutely *cried* this morning from mere fatigue? I think I never, not even in times of real affliction, felt my spirits so

exhausted as at present. I would give anything to be going into the country, and to live among trees and flowers till I felt the spirit of poetry come back again—it is quite put to flight by petty cares, which I think are almost as much at variance with it as fashionable dinner. There is a most severe and really well-written review in Fraser's Magazine this month, upon Moore's Life of Byron." . . . .

TO MR. L———.

April 19, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"I cannot tell you how much I shall value your beautiful token of remembrance:* nothing could be at once so acceptable to my tastes, and so delightfully associated with all my recollections of you as this glorious opera; and I quite agree with you that it is impossible for anything so essentially full of beauty, so composed 'for eternity,' *ever* to become hackneyed to feeling and imagination, notwithstanding its countless wrongs from the hands of Goths, Vandals, and young ladies. You must not suppose, however,—though I shall treasure this book more than all the others of my musical library—that I shall need anything to remind me of you. One so haunted as I am by the ceaseless cry of 'Alone, alone,' retains no transitory remembrance of those who had power sometimes to bid that voice be silenced.

"You will be surprised to hear, that notwithstanding my healthful looks, of which you so cruelly informed me yesterday morning, Dr. ———, who visited me after you were gone, positively forbid the intended excursion to Ince,† and gave me most serious admonitions with regard to that complaint of the heart from which I suffer. He says that nothing but great care and perfect quiet will prevent its assuming a dangerous character: and I told him that he might as well prescribe me the *powdered diamonds* which physicians of the olden time ordered for royal patients. I must own that this has somewhat deepened the melancholy impressions under which I am going to Ireland, for I cannot but feel assured that *he is right*.

* The Opera of Tancredi.

† The seat of Henry Blundell, Esq., famous for its fine collection of statuary.

"Will you not dislike . . . . . more than ever when I tell you that our friend Mr. Roscoe is actually to be deprived of a pension which he received from the Royal Society of Literature? I learned this from the Mr. ———, whom I told you I expected to see, but he begged me not to make it generally known at present. Mathias also, one of our most distinguished Italian scholars, now a very old man in narrow circumstances, is to undergo a similar privation. Is it not a *miserable* piece of economy in an English king to retrench a thousand a-year (for *all* these literary pensions amounted to no more) from men of letters in advanced age? I feel quite grieved about Mr. Roscoe, for besides that I am afraid he can ill spare it, the wound to his feelings seemed to be so great. I can scarcely think of it without tears, when I recollect his touching expression of feebleness united with so much that is venerable. I mean to sail, if I possibly can, to-morrow, and shall write to you as soon as I am a little settled in Dublin, where I hope we shall meet in the autumn. I have had a very good account of my two boys; I am quite amused to hear from their master, that little —— has already excited a general musical taste in the school, and has actually persuaded all the boys to subscribe for a music-master." . . . . .

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Hemans' departure from England—Letters from Kilkenny—Catholic and Protestant animosity—Pictures at Lord Ormonde's—Visit to Woodstock—Parallel between the Poems of Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Tighe—Raphael's great Madonna—Kilfane—Water-birds—Deserted churchyard—Visit to a Convent—Passage in Symmons' Translation of the Agamemnon—Kilkenny—Irish politics—"The Death-song of Alcestis"—Dublin Musical Festival—Paganini—"Napoleon's Midnight Review"—Further Anecdotes of Paganini—Letters from the county Wicklow—Glendalough—The Devil's Glen—Wood scenery—Letters from Dublin—Miniature by Robinson—Society of Dublin—"The Swan and the Sky-lark"—Difficulty in procuring new books.

In the spring of 1831, Mrs. Hemans took leave of England, for the last time. From this point, therefore, my memorials of her life and literary pursuits (always inseparably connected) must, of necessity, be slighter than those of the time of daily personal intercourse. But it was her happy fortune, wherever she went, to attach a few faithful friends to her, and it was her nature to prefer the society of those few to the success and celebrity which she might, at will, have commanded in

wider and more brilliant circles. To one of the small household band which she drew round her in Dublin, I am largely indebted for details of the manner of her life and the direction of her mind, during the last years of her pilgrimage; and for extracts from that familiar correspondence, in which she loved to journalize the thoughts and impressions of the passing hours, for the benefit of those for the time nearest and dearest her. Her more general letters to her friends in England will readily be distinguished from these.

After a short stay in Dublin, Mrs. Hemans paid a visit to her brother, who was then stationed in the county of Kilkenny. The following letters were written while she was under his roof.

TO MR. L ———.

"Hermitage, near Kilkenny, June 21, 1831.

"My dear Sir,

"The sight of your letter awoke in me, I can assure you, not a few 'compunctious visitings,' as I think you must have imagined I had forgot past times and all your kindness to me. This is, however, far from having been the case: I have again and again spoken of you and thought of you, and intended to write; but I can give you no idea of the strange, unsettled, agitated life I have been leading since I came to this country: obliged, amidst a thousand inward anxieties, to give my time and attention to the claims of a new society; and perpetually interrupted by a state of health more tremulous than usual. I must not lead you to suppose that I have been altogether unhappy since my leaving England: I have, on the contrary, found more of happiness and true kindness here than I have expected—still peace and leisure have been far from me, and I have scarcely been able to write a line." . . . .

"Hermitage, Kilkenny, June 22d, 1831.

. . . . "I arrived here on Saturday last. I left Dublin with great regret, for amidst many anxieties much and unexpected happiness had met me there. . . . . My brother is still in Clare, but we expect him very shortly. ——— is a perfect heroine: she has sent her man servants out of the

house to make room for my boys; and we are quite unprotected except by my brother's name. I must say, I feel sometimes a little nervous at night, particularly after hearing of the attacks made upon our houses to procure arms, with which our dwelling is known to be amply supplied. . . . . This county is, however, tolerably quiet; but the spirit of hatred existing between Protestant and Papist, is what I could never have conceived had I not visited these scenes. Yesterday evening I was taking a quiet walk beside the beautiful river Nore, everything looking bright, and still, and peaceful round me, when I met one of my brother's men there with pistols stuck in his belt, which I was told he always carried, *on account of his being a Protestant.* I asked a young clergyman who visits us to attend me to a Catholic place of worship, as I wished to hear the service; he said that he would most willingly escort me anywhere else, and, as far as his own feelings were concerned, would go with me even there, but probably the consequence would be the desertion of almost all his congregation. You may imagine that I did not press the point. I hope in my next letter to send you the lines on Naples. I cannot tell you how much I regret being of so little use to you this year; but my life, in this land of agitation, has partaken of all that characterises the country. I have indeed found some happiness, for which I am grateful, but no peace, no leisure—and have been scarce able to write a line. Still I love Ireland, and feel that I shall do so still more. My health has *not* improved lately.

"I am most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

. . . . "I saw a few beautiful pictures at Lord Ormonde's the other day. One of these which struck me the most was a Madonna of Corregio's; so still, so earnest, so *absorbed* in its expression of holy love, that it realized my deepest conception of the character. What I thought most remarkable was, that all this expression is given to a countenance with nearly *closed* eyes, for the eyelids fall so heavily —I should rather say *softly*, over them." . . .

. . . . "I wish to give you an account of a rather interesting day which I lately passed, before its images become faint in my recollection. We went to Woodstock, the place

where the late Mrs. Tighe, whose poetry has always been very touching to my feelings, passed the latest years of her life, and near which she is buried. The scenery of the place is magnificent, of a style which I think I prefer to every other; wild, profound glens, rich with every hue and form of foliage, and a rapid river sweeping through them, now lost and now lighting up the deep woods with *sudden* flashes of its waves. Altogether it reminded me more of Hawthornden, than any thing I have seen since—though it wants the solemn rock-pinnacles of that romantic place. I wish I could have been alone with Nature and my thoughts, but, to my surprise, I found myself the object of quite *a reception*. The Chief Justice and many other persons had been invited to meet me, and I was to be made completely the lady of the day. There was no help for it, though I never felt so much as if I wanted a *large leaf* to wrap me up and shelter me from all curiosity and attention. Still one cannot but feel grateful for kindness, and much was shown me. I should have told you, that Woodstock is now the seat of Mr. and Lady Louisa Tighe. . . . . .

Amongst other persons of the party was Mr. Henry Tighe, the widower of the poetess. . . . . .

He had just been exercising, I found one of his accomplishments in the translation into Latin of a little poem of mine, and I am told that his version is very elegant. We went to the tomb, 'the grave of a poetess,' where there is a monument by Flaxman: it consists of a recumbent female figure, with much of the repose, the mysterious sweetness of happy death, which is to me so affecting in monumental sculpture. There is, however a very small *Titania*-looking sort of figure with wings, sitting at the head of the sleeper, and intended to represent Psyche, which I thought interfered wofully with the singleness of effect which the tomb would have produced: unfortunately, too, the monument is carved in a very rough stone, which allows no delicacy of touch. That place of rest made me very thoughtful; I could not but reflect on the many changes which had brought me to the spot I had commemorated three years since, without the slightest idea of ever visiting it; and though surrounded by attention and the appearance of interest, my heart was envying the repose of her who slept there. . . .

. . . . . "Mr. Tighe has just sent me his Latin translation of my lines, 'the Grave of a Household.' It seems very elegant as far as I can venture to judge, but what strikes me most is the concluding thought, (so peculiarly belonging to Christianity,) and the ancient language in which it is thus embodied.

'Si nihil ulterius mundo, si sola voluptas
Esset *terrenis*—quid feres omnia Amor?'

I suppose the idea of an affection powerful and spiritual enough to oversweep the grave, (of course the beauty of such an idea belongs not *to me*, but to the spirit of our faith,) is not to be found in the loftiest strain of any classic writer."

It could hardly be expected that such a visit as the one described in the foregoing extract should pass without its record. In an earlier letter, Mrs. Hemans had said, "I think I shall feel much interest in visiting 'the grave of a poetess. . . . . her poetry has always touched me greatly, from a similarity which I imagine I discover between her destiny and my own." The lyric* which was written after she had *seen* a place already visited by her in imagination, contains little more than the thoughts intimated in the letter, versified with some additional incident and imagery; and it may be noted as amongst the curiosities of authorship, that the earlier verses, produced under the strong influence of the imagination alone, and happier, because simpler, than those which may be called the offspring of memory "The Grave of a Poetess," (published among the "Records of Woman,") is throughout full of feeling, and of a spirit more cheerful,—because better able to raise itself above the cares, and changes, and partings of earth,—than that which breathes in the poems of the gifted but melancholy author of "Psyche." Its *moral* is comprehended in the two last stanzas.

"Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,
A voice not loud but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among,
How often didst thou weep!

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* Published among the "National Lyrics," and beginning

"I stood where the lip of song lay low,
Where the dust had gathered on beauty's brow,
Where stillness hung on the heart of love,
And a marble weeper kept watch above."

Where could'st thou fix on mortal ground,
Thy tender thoughts and high?
Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
And joy the poet's eye!

On turning again to the "Psyche," a poem full of musical verse, delicate thought, and happy personification, it has been impossible not to recognise the great general similarity of mind which existed between its author and Mrs. Hemans: whether in her mood of hope and buoyancy, and complete abandonment to the art in which she was so well skilled, or in her sadder hours of lonely thought, and night-watching, and melancholy "panting upon the thorns of life." The stanza, for instance, which opens the fifth canto of the "Legend of Love," has an enthusiasm and harmony of numbers common to both.

"Delightful visions of my lonely hours,
Charms of my life and solace of my care!
Ah! would the muse but lend proportioned powers,
And give the language, equal to declare
The wonders which she bids my fancy share,
When, wrapt in her, to other worlds I fly,
See angel-forms unalterably fair,
And hear the inexpressive harmony,
That seems to float on air and warble through the sky."

Again, in the "Verses written at the commencement of the Spring of 1802," there is a remarkable coincidence of sentiment, and even of imagery, with Mrs. Hemans' "Breathings of Spring;"* one of those poems in which her deepest and most abiding feelings were unconsciously uttered. In both the sights and sounds of the season are invoked—in both is wrought out Byron's most beautiful, yet most bitter thought,

'I turned from all she brought, *to all she could not bring!*'

but far the most fully and sweetly by the later poetess, as, turning from the "fairy-peopled world of flowers" and "the bright waters," and

. . . . . "the joyous leaves
Whose tremblings gladden many a copse and glade,"

—she asks earnestly and sadly,

"But what awak'st thou in the *heart*, O spring!

* Published with the "Records of Woman."

The human heart, with all its dreams and sighs,
Thou that giv'st back so many a buried thing,
Restorer of forgotten harmonies;
Fresh songs and scents break forth where'er thou art.
What wak'st thou in the heart?

"Too much, O there too much!—We know not well
Wherefore it should be thus—but, roused by thee,
What fond, strange yearnings, from the soul's deep cell
Gush for the faces we no more shall see;
How are we haunted in the wind's low tone,
By voices that are gone!

"Looks of familiar love, that never more
Never on earth, our aching eyes shall greet,
Past words of welcome to our household door,
And vanished smiles and sounds of parted feet;
Spring, 'mid the murmurs of thy flowering trees,
Why, reviv'st thou these?

"Vain longings for the dead!" . . .

The parallel between the writings of Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Hemans might be wrought out to a far greater extent; but it is better to indicate than to exhaust. Those who are interested in comparative criticism will, I think, find that there is a difference of twenty years of the history of poetry between the imagery and epithets employed by these two accomplished women. In the sonnet, perhaps, Mrs. Tighe has the advantage, Mrs. Hemans never having wholly attained the power of compression, which is a requisite essential to compositions of this difficult but exquisite class. On the other hand, most of the poems by the authoress of "Psyche," addressed to individuals, or written to commemorate some particular domestic trial or blessing,—sincere and earnest though they be,—are less touching than the more indistinct allusions to the tenderness of a mother, to the sweet confidence between sisters, to the reliance of woman upon him she loves worthily, and to the desolateness of heart when change, or death sever any of these holy ties,—which are to be found in Mrs. Heman's lyrics and scenes, and which may be all considered but as so many utterances of her own feelings. How much more healthy, indeed, is the dispensation under which poets live now, when feeling and emotion are, as it were, *fused* into verse, while the sacredness of the secret heart is respected; than that under which sorrow and joy were openly parcelled out, and paraded

in the "light of common-day;"—when strains of lamentation for the heaviest affliction, or of that joy with which no stranger should intermeddle, were publicly poured forth, without reserve, and may it not almost be surmised, without much deep or sincere feeling? As an instance,—let Miss Seward's pompous elegy on the death of her early-called sister, whose name for the occasion, was refined into "Alinda," be compared with "the Graves of a Household," or the "Haunted Mansion," —and our writers and readers will have no cause to regret the more natural days in which they live.

Before returning from this digression to correspondence and anecdote, it may be mentioned, that another proof of the deep and peculiar interest with which Mrs. Hemans regarded Mrs. Tighe, may be found in a sonnet, published among the "Poetical Remains,") on "Records of immature genius," which was written after reading some of her earlier poems in manuscript. It might be applied with strict and beautiful significance to all but the latest works of its writer.

'Oh! judge in thoughtful tenderness of those
Who, richly dowered for life, are called to die
Ere the soul's flame, through storms hath won repose
In truth's divinest ether still and high!
Let their mind's riches claim a trustful sigh!
Deem them but sad sweet fragments of a strain,
First notes of some yet struggling harmony,
By the strong rush, the crowding joy and pain
Of many inspirations met, and held
From its true sphere." . . . . . .

. . . . "I do not think I mentioned to you having seen at Woodstock, a large and beautifully painted copy of Raphael's 'great Madonna,' as it is called,—the one at Dresden: I never was enabled to form so perfect an idea of this noble work before. The principal figure certainly looks the 'Queen of Heaven,' as she stands serenely upon her footstool of clouds; but there is, I think, rather a want of *human* tenderness in her calm eyes, and on her regal brow. I visited yesterday another beautiful place some miles from us. (I am very sorry that the neighborhood has lately been seized with quite a mania of making parties for me.) Kilfane, however, the scene of yesterday's *reunion*, is a very lovely spot, quite in different style of beauty from Woodstock; soft, rich, and pastoral-looking. Such a tone of verdure I think I never beheld anywhere; it was quite an emerald darkness, a gorgeous

gloom, *brooding* over velvet turf, and deep, silent streams, from such trees as I could fancy might have grown in Armida's enchanted wood. Some swans on the dark waters made me think of another line of Spenser's, in which he speaks of the fair Una, as

'Making a sunshine in the shady place.'

The house contains some interesting works of art; amongst others, a very beautiful bust of Raphael, which was new to me. It is rather like what I think ——'s face might be in manhood: the eye mild and earnest, the long hair widely parted, and the noble brow with that high intellectual serenity *throned* upon it, which I cannot but consider as characterizing the loftiest order of genius." . . .

. . . . "I forgot to tell you of a beautiful remark that I heard made lately in conversation, (it is not very often one hears any thing worth recording,) it came from the Chief Justice, when I met him at Kilfane; I think it was with regard to some of Canova's beautiful sculpture in the room, that he said, '*Is not Perfection always affecting?*' I thought he was quite right, for the highest degree of beauty in any art, certainly always excites, if not tears, at least the *inward* feeling of tears." . . . .

. . . . "The graceful play of water-birds is always particularly delightful to me; those bright features convey to my fancy a fuller impression of the joy of freedom than any other in nature, perhaps because they seem the lords of two elements. The enjoyment of having wings, and being able to *bathe* them too, this torrid weather, must be enviable: I have heard, that in Corsica, the sun, during the dog-days is called the 'Lion-Sun;' I am sure his present dealings with us are quite *lion-like* in their ferocity." . . . .

. . . "I have discovered a very striking scene in this neighborhood since I last wrote to you—a wild and deserted Catholic church-yard; but I believe I must describe it when I write next, that I may not be too late for this day's post."

. . . . "I will now describe to you the scene I mentioned in my last letter as having so much impressed me. It was a little green hill, rising darkly and abruptly against a very sunny back-ground of sloping cornfields and woods. It appeared smooth till near the summit, but was there crested—almost *castellated* indeed—by what I took for thickly-set, painted rocks, but, on a near approach, discovered to be old tomb-stones, forming quite a little 'city of the silent.' I left our car to explore it, and discovered some ruins of a very affecting character: a small church laid open to the sky, forsaken and moss-grown; its front lying overturned on the green sod; some of the rude ornaments themselves but ruins. One of these, which had fallen amongst thick heath and wild-flowers, was simply a wooden cross with a female name upon it, and the inscription, 'May her soul rest in peace!' You will not wonder at the feeling which prompted me to stoop and raise it up again. My memory will often revert to that lonely spot, sacred to the hope of immortality, and touched by the deep quiet of the evening skies." . . .

. . . "I paid a visit some days ago to the convent here, but was told at the gate that I could not be admitted, as 'the ladies were not to speak a word for eight days.' In an unwonted spirit of self-congratulation, I turned away, and rather think that, actuated by the same spirit, *I* spoke words enough for eight days in the *one* following." . . . .

. . . "I have just been reading in Blackwood some extracts from what seems to be a splendid translation of the Agamemnon of Æschylus, by a Mr. Symmons. One passage, describing the beacon-fires which announce the taking of Troy, and send on the tidings from hill to hill, as the light borne in a torch-race, is really written—I should rather say transfused into 'words that burn.'* I am going to order the

* Possibly this magnificent passage, so well rendered by the translator in question, may have arrested Mrs. Hemans' attention more forcibly than ever its intrinsic power would warrant, by striking a peculiar chord of her imagination. Her descriptions of the effects of fire are always singularly impulsive and spirited. Thus in "The Bride of the Greek Isles," (Records of Woman,)—

> "Man may not fetter nor ocean tame
> The might and the wrath of the rushing flame!

book, which I see is much commended for the fidelity, as well as poetic spirit, of the translator." . . .

. . . "Kilkenny is a singular-looking old place, full of ruins, or rather fragments of ruins; bits of old towers and abbey-windows; and its wild, *lazzaroni*-looking population, must, I should think, be tremendous when in a state of excitement. Many things in the state of this country, even during its present temporary quiet, are very painful to English feeling. It is scarcely possible to conceive bitterness and hatred existing in the human heart, when one sees, nature smiling so brightly and so peacefully all round; and yet these dark feelings *do* exist here to a degree which I could scarcely have believed possible. . . Religion, or rather religious animosity, is carried to a height which I could not have conceived *possible;* and I am sometimes painfully reminded of Moore's lines, where he speaks of the land in which

. . "hearts fell off that ought to twine,

It hath twined the mast, like a glittering snake
That coils up a tree from a dusky brake;
It hath touched the sails, and their canvas rolls
Away from its breath into shrivell'd scrolls;
It hath taken the flags high place in air,
And reddened the stars with its wavy glare,
And sent out bright arrows, and soared in glee,
To a burning mount 'midst the moonlight sea." . .

And again, in "The Shepherd Poet of the Alps," published among the "Poetical Remains"—

"Thus woke the dreamer one weary night—
There flashed through his dungeon a swift, strong light;
He sprang up—he climbed up to the grating bars,—
It was not the rising of moon or stars
But a signal of flame from a peak of snow,
Rock'd through the dark skies to and fro.
There shot forth another—another still—
A hundred answers of hill to hill!
Tossing like pines in the tempest's way,
Joyously, wildly, the bright spires play,
And each is hailed with a pealing shout,
For the high Alps waving their banners out!"

And man profaned what God had given;
Till some were heard to curse the shrine
Where others knelt to heaven.'

But I will not dwell upon these dark subjects."

From a further letter, dated Kilkenny, and written just before Mrs. Hemans returned to Dublin—

. . . "I am very glad to leave this place, with its wearisome politics, which seems to weave such a net over one's mind, that I have sometimes felt as I imagine the redoubtable hero Gulliver must have done, with the countless, tiny threads of the Lilliputians entangling him in all directions. How *intense* is sometimes the wish for freedom, for nature, for 'the wings of the morning' to fly away, when narrow and worldly spirits are contending around one! There is pain in that passionate desire, and yet I cannot but see it in the revelation of a higher nature, of a being which must have an immortal home, of a thirst which is not to be quenched but by ever-living waters." . . .

During her visit to Hermitage, Mrs. Hemans wrote more than usual, possibly under the happy influence of the situation of her retreat and the scenery around it; a delightful contrast to the barren flatness of the environs of Liverpool. "I find it," she says, in one of her letters, "a pretty little cottage; and though the surrounding country is rather pleasant than beautiful, still there is a sweet view from the upper windows, and in particular from mine: I see a blue range of mountains from where I am now sitting to write, and I hear the sounds of the river." Here she composed many scenes and lyrics, to one of which (the Death-song of Alcestis) an interesting allusion will be found in the next fragment. She was able to read, too, more uninterruptedly than she had done or some years. She now, for the first time, made friendship with Coleridge's collected works, to her great delight; and she was so much interested with his correspondence with Sir H. Davy, which also came before her about this time, (in Dr. Paris' life of the philosopher,) as to transcribe a great part of it. It will be seen by the course of her reading, and the occasional notices of books which follow, that the tone of her mind was deepening, as well as becoming healthier; that an increased disposition to

consider the conditions which bind man to another and loftier destiny than he fulfils in this short-lived world, was taking the place of her former more exclusive and imaginative subjects of contemplation. The great truths of religion, in short, (I use the word in no sectarian sense,) were beginning to gain a positive ascendency over her mind,—to be regarded no longer as mere matters of speculation, high-toned and picturesque, but as the moving principles of her daily life.

. . . "It was with some difficulty that I refrained from making Alcestis express the hope of an immortal reunion: I know this would be out of character, and yet could scarcely imagine how love so infinite in its nature could ever have existed without the hope (even if undefined and unacknowledged) of a 'heavenly country,' an unchangeable resting-place. This awoke in me many other thoughts with regard to the state of human affections, their hopes and their conflicts in the days of the 'gay religions, full of pomp and gold,' which offering, as they did, so much of grace and beauty to the imagination, yet held out so little comfort to the *heart*. Then I thought how much these affections owed to a deeper and more spiritual faith, to the idea of a God who knows all our inward struggles, and pities our sufferings. I think I shall weave all these ideas into another little poem, which I will call 'Love in the ancient world.' Tell me if you like the thought." . . .

The Musical Festival, held in Dublin in the autumn of the year 1831, brought Paganini to that city. The humours of his reception there will never be forgotten by those who chanced to witness them; and it might be told how the light-hearted gossoons and girleens of Dublin crowded round his carriage, with fervent and noisy curiosity, equal, in its effect at least, to the more intelligently musical *furore* of the easily-moved population of the Italian cities;—how, upon his appearing at the theatre, where the performances were held, "the gods" insisted upon his mounting the piano-forte, that they might be treated with an ample and satisfactory view of his spectral and shadowy figure. But a more interesting, if less lively, description of the effect produced by his appearance, and his wonder-working music, will be found in the next extracts.

. . . "To begin with the appearance of the "foreign

wonder,'—it is very different from what the indiscriminating newspaper accounts would lead you to suppose: he is certainly singular-looking; pale, slight, and with long, neglected hair; but I saw nothing whatever of that *wild fire*, that almost ferocious inspiration of mien, which has been ascribed to him;—indeed I thought the expression of his countenance rather that of good-natured and mild *enjouement*, than of anything else,—and his bearing altogether simple and natural. His first performance consisted of a tema, with variations, from the beautiful *Preghiera* in "Mose:" here I was rather disappointed, but merely because he did not play alone. I suppose the performance on the single string required the support of other instruments; but he occasionally drew from that string a tone of wailing, *heart-piercing* tenderness, almost too much to be sustained by any one whose soul can give the full response. It was not, however, till his second performance, on all the strings, that I could form a full idea of his varied magic. A very delicate accompaniment on the piano did not in the least interfere with the singleness of effect in this instance. The subject was the Venetian air, 'Come to me when day-light sets'—how shall I give you an idea of all the versatility, *the play of soul*, embodied in the variations upon that simple air? Imagine a passage of the most fairy-like delicacy, more aerial than you would suppose it possible for human touch to produce, suddenly succeeded by an absolute *parody* of itself; the same notes repeated with an expression of absolute comic humor, which forced me to laugh, however reluctantly:—it was as if an old man, the 'Ancient Mariner' himself, were to sing an impassioned Italian air, in a snoring voice, after Fasta. Well, after one of these sudden travestics, for I can call them nothing else, the *creature* would look all around him, with an air of the most delighted *bonhommie*, exactly like a witty child, who had just accomplished a piece of successful mischief. The *pizzicato* passages were also wonderful; the indescribably rapid notes seemed *flung* out in *sparks* of music, with a triumphant glee which conveys the strongest impression I ever received of Genius rejoicing over its own bright creations. But I vainly wish that my words could impart to you a full conception of the wizard-like music.

"There was nothing else of particular interest in the evening's performance:—a good deal of silvery warbling from Stockhausen, but I never find it leave any more vivid remembrance on my mind than the singing of birds. I am wrong

however,—I must except one thing, 'Napoleon's Midnight Review,'—the music of which, by Neukomm, I thought superb. The words are translated from the German; they describe the hollow sound of a drum at midnight, and the peal of a ghostly trumpet arousing the dead hosts of Napoleon from their sleep under the northern snows, and along the Egyptian sands, and in the sunny fields of Italy. Then another trumpet-blast, and the chief himself arises, 'with his martial cloak around him,' to review the whole army; and thus it concludes—'the pass-word given is—*France;* the answer—*St. Helene.*' The music, which is, of a very wild supernatural character, a good deal in Weber's *incantation* style, accords well with this grand idea; the single trump's followed by a long, rolling, ominous sound from the double-drum made me quite thrill with indefinable feelings. Braham's singing was not equal to the instrumental part, but he did not disfigure it by his customary and *vulgarizing* graces."

In a subsequent letter, Mrs. Hemans again lingers upon the delight she has received from Paganini's matchless performances.

. . . . . "I enclose you a programme of the concert which I again heard this triumphant music last night. It is impossible for me to describe how much of intense feeling its full-swelling dreamy tones awoke within me. His second performance (the *Adagio a doppie corde*) made me imagine that I was then *first* wakening in what a German would call the 'music land.' Its predominant expression was that of overpowering passionate regret; such, at least, was the dying languor of the long *sostenuto* notes, that it seemed as if the musician was himself about to let fall his instrument, and sink under the mastery of his own emotion. It reminded me, by some secret and strange analogy, of a statue I once described to you, representing Sappho about to drop her lyre in utter desolation of heart. This was immediately followed by the rapid *flashing* music—for the strings were as if they sent out lightning in their glee—of the most joyous rondo by Kreutzer you can imagine. The last piece, the 'Dance of the Witches,' is a complete exemplification of the grotesque in music—some parts of it imitate the quavering, garrulous voices of very old women, half scolding, half complaining—and then would come a burst of wild, fantastic, half-fearful

gladness. I think Burns, 'Tam O'Shanter, (not Mr. Thom's—by way of contrast to Sappho) something of a parallel in poetry to this strange production in music. I saw more of Paganini's countenance last night, and was still more pleased with it than before; the original mould in which it has been cast, is of a decidedly fine and intellectual character, though the features are so worn by the wasting fire which appears his vital element." . . . . .

. . . . "I did not hear Paganini again after the performance I described to you, but I received a very eloquent description from —— of a subsequent triumph of his genius. It was a concerto of a dramatic character, and intended, as I was told, to embody the little tale of a wanderer sinking to sleep in a solitary place at midnight. He is supposed to be visited by a solemn and impressive vision, imaged in music of the most thrilling style. Then, after all his lonely fears and wild fantasies, the day-spring breaks upon him in a triumphant rondo, and all is joy and gladness."

. . . . . "——related to me a most interesting conversation he had held with Paganini in a private circle. The latter was describing to him the sufferings (do you remember a line of Byron's

'The starry Galileo, with his woes,)

by which he pays for his consummate excellence. He scarcely knows what sleep is, and his nerves are wrought to such almost preternatural acuteness, that harsh, even common sounds, are often torture to him: he is sometimes unable to bear a whisper in his room. His passion for music he described as an all-absorbing, a *consuming* one; in fact, he looks as if no other life than that etherial one of melody were circulating within his veins: but he added with a glow of triumph kindling through deep sadness '*mais c'est un don du ceil!*' I heard all this, which was no more than I had fully imagined, with a still deepening conviction, that it is the gifted beyond all others—those whom the multitude believe to be rejoicing in their own fame, strong in their own resources—who have most need of true hearts to rest upon, and of hope in God to support them."

The next extracts are dated from the county of Wicklow, a later period of the same autumn.

. . . . . "I was very unwell for some days after my arirval here as the mountains gave me so stormy a reception, that I reached this place with the dripping locks of a mermaid, and never was in a condition so utterly desolate. In the midst of my annoyances from the rain and storm; I was struck by one beautiful effect upon the hills; it was produced by a rainbow, diving down into a gloomy mountain pass which it seemed really to *flood* with its colored glory. I could not help thinking that it was like our religion, piercing and carrying brightness into the depths of sorrow and of tomb. All the rest of the scene round that one illuminated spot, was wrapt in the most lowering darkness. My impressions of the country here have not hitherto been very bright ones—but I will not yet judge of it: the wheather is most unfavorable, and I have not quite recovered the effect of my first day's adventures. The day before yesterday, we visited the Vale of the Seven Churches and Lake Glendalough; the day was one of a kind which I like: soft, still, and grey, such as makes the earth appear 'a pensive but a happy place.' I was a little disapointed in the scenery. I think it possesses much more for the imagination then the eye, though there are certainly some striking points of view; particularly that where 'a round tower of other days' rises amidst the remains of three churches, the principal one of which, (considered, I find, as quite the Holy of holies,) is thickly surrounded with tombs. I was also much pleased with a little wild waterfall, quite buried among the trees; its many cascades fall into pools of a dark green transparency, and in one of these I observed what seemed to me a remarkable effect. The body of water threw itself into its deep bed with scarcely any spray, and left an almost smooth and clear surface, *through* which, as if through ice, I saw its foamy clouds rising and working tumultuously from beneath. In following the course of this fall down very slippery mossy stones, I received from our guide (a female) the very flattering compliment of being "the most *courageousest* and *lightest-footedest* lady' she had ever conducted there. This, I think, is worthy of being recorded with the one paid me by Sir Walter Scott's old gamekeeper, in the woods of Abbotsford. We afterwards went upon the lake, the dark waters and treeless shores of which have something impressive in their stern desolation, though I do not think the rocks quite high enough for grandeur. Several parties have been arranged for me to visit other celebrated scenes in the neighborhood but I do not think that St. Kevin, who, I suppose presides over the weather here, seems more propitious to female intrusion than of old." . . . . .

. . . . "It is time that I should tell you something of my adventures among these wild hills since I last wrote. I must own that the scenery still disappoints me, though I do, not dare to make the confession openly. There certainly are scenes of beauty, lying deep, like veins of gold, in the heart of the country, but they must, like these veins, be sought through much that is dreary and desolate. I have been more struck with the Devil's Glen, (I wish it had any other name,) than all the other spots I have visited; it is certainly a noble ravine, a place where you might imagine the mountain Christians of old making their last stand, fighting the battle of their faith: a deep glen of rocks *cleft* all through by a sounding stream of the clear brown 'cairn-gorm' color, which, I think Sir Walter somewhere describes as being among the characteristics of mountain waters. . . . . .

. . . "To-day has been one of most perfect loveliness. I enjoyed the change of the wild, rough mountains for the softer wood landscapes, as we approached Powerscourt. I think I love wood-scenery best of all others, for its *kindly* look of shelter."

This chapter cannot be better closed than by a few letters addressed to her English friends, dated at a later period of the year, and in the course of the following spring.

"2, Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin, Nov. 5th.

"My dear——,

"I cannot for a moment delay telling you of the kindly and touching memories which the sight of the——(only just received) has excited in my mind. I am sure your friendship will have suggested any reason but forgetfulness for my long, silence. . . . . Be assured that these recollections are there *for ever*, though the sickness of the spirit makes me often seem very, very fitful in expressing them. I returned from the country rather wearied than refreshed, as I unfortunately found myself an object of much curiosity, and, in gratitude I ought to add, attention; still it fatigued my spirits, which were longing for full and quiet communion with nature.

On my return to Dublin, I became a sufferer from the longest and severest attack of heart-palpitation I have ever experienced; it was accompanied by almost daily fainting-fits, and a languor quite indescribable. From this state I have again arisen, and that with an elasticity which has surprised myself. I am now much better: my friends are re-assembled for the winter, so that my spirits are in a far more composed state, and I do hope that I shall now be able to write much more frequently. . . . I shall write to you again in a day or two by a young artist, Mr. Robertson, whom I wish to introduce to your acquaintance, and it will give me pleasure if you can in any way serve. I think you will be interested in seeing a picture which he has lately painted of me, and another of Charles. The latter is thought to be a most delightful likeness; in the face, but to have failed in the figure; indeed, he has proposed, himself, making a complete alteration in the the latter, but has been prevented by a want of time both on his part and my own."

TO MR. L.——

"Dec. 9th. 1831.

. . . "I really was delighted to hear from you again, and the more so as you had been frequently in my thoughts for several days previously, in consequence of my having met with a gentleman who seemed to be well acquainted with you, thought he could not give me your present address. . . .

"You know how my health varies with every emotion of my mind, and will not wonder that it should have suffered severely from my anxiety; but this now passed, and if it be true that there is

'Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice,
Nella miseria.' . . . .

I think the *reverse* would be applicable to remembered sorrow when the spirit has regained peace. I hope our correspondence will not be again interrupted for so long a time. Pray come over to Ireland, and let us have some of our pleasant hours again. I cannot promise that you would find much to to attract you in the society of Dublin, where there is little of real intellectual taste,

and more in my opinion, of show and splendour than real refinement; but this last is a point on which I am so very fastidious, that I ought to distrust my own judgment . . . I go out very little, and find my tastes daily becoming more retired and more and more averse to the glitter of fashionable society. I should not forget to tell you how much I was enchanted with Paganini whom I heard at the Musical Festival here: his is certainly the most spiritual of music; such a power must be almost *consuming* to its possessor, and his appearance quite confirms this impression: it reminds me of some lines of Byron's, referring, I believe, to Rousseau;

> . . . . 'Like a tree
> On fire with lightning, with etherial flame.
> Kindled he seems and blasted.' . . .

"I am longing to hear some of your music again, and to have it again united to my words. I lately wrote a little poem, the 'Swan and the Skylark,' (I think you would find it in this month's number of Blackwood,) which brought you to my mind, because I thought of the power and expression you would give to the contrasted songs contained in it—the death song of the Swan, and the Lark's triumphant chant. I have also written another, which I should particularly like you to set, because I think it one of my best efforts; it is called the 'Death-song of Alcestis,' and is in the Amulet for this year. If you think any part of it adapted for music, I should be exceedingly gratified by its being joined to *yours*. I have not written anything which has pleased myself more. . . I shall soon be writing to Miss Jewsbury, and will not fail to give your message about the songs. I am very sorry to say that she is soon going to India, in which country Mr. Fletcher has obtained a chaplaincy. One can indeed ill afford to lose a friend in this cold harsh world, more especially a *gifted* friend. How few have the least influence over one's feelings or imagination! I was truly concerned to hear of Mr. ——'s death, for I felt how much you would lose in him, and it is not easy for refined characters to attach themselves anew. Life has few companions for the delicate minded." . . .

"2, Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin, Dec. 29th, 1831.

"Your kind letter was most welcome, arriving, as it did, at a time when I have been used to derive cheerfulness, or at

least support, either from your presence, or some mark of your remembrance. It found me *quite* alone; my brother had taken my elder boys to pass their holydays at Killaloe, and even little Charles was gone on a visit of a few days, which I could not be selfish enough to refuse him. But I can give you a better account of myself than has for a long time been in my power: my spirits and health are both greatly revived, and though I am yet unequal to any *continuous* exertion of mind still I am not without hope, that if I go on improving, all my energies may be restored to me. I owe much to the devoted kindness of a friend, to whom I cannot be sufficiently grateful. I almost fear being too sanguine; but how often have you urged me to 'hope on, hope ever!' You ask me what I have been reading lately; the access to new books here is not nearly as easy as in England, at least for me; and, in consequence, I have been much thrown back upon our old friends, especially the Germans, Goethe and Schiller, and Oehlenschlaeger more especially, and I think I love them more and more for every perusal, so that I cannot regret the causes which have rendered my connexion with them more intimate than ever. I need scarcely tell you how every page is fraught with kindly and pleasant recollections of you and all our happy and intellectual intercourse. If you have anything new of Tieck's—indeed, any of his works from Germany lately, (except 'Sternbald's Wanderungen,' which I possess,) I should be very glad if you could lend them to me for a time. I have only met with one German Scholar since I came to Ireland, and with him I had only a few hours of passing intercourse. It is very long since I have heard from Dr. Channing, or any of my American friends; indeed, I grieve to say that I do not deserve to hear from them, for the langour of mind and heart which has so long been creeping over me, makes letter-writing, except to the very few who understand me a task more irksome than I can describe; the consequence has been that I have nearly dropped all merely literary correspondents. I had, however, lately, a very pleasant letter from Mr. Wordsworth, though he seems to look upon the present prospects of both England and Ireland with anticipations of the most gloomy character. May I beg you would be kind enough to look amongst the books which I left in your care, for a Dictionary of the Bible, in one volume, and also for Cumberland's Observer, in four volumes. I am wishing for reference to both these works.

The young artist of whom I spoke to you lately has greatly altered and improved his picture of me; every one now is struck with the likeness, and I can perceive it strongly myself;* he has made also a very delightful portrait of little Charles. I must tell you of the latter, that he has now gone to school and was very successful in his Christmass examination, having won three premiums. Tell —— I shall be able to send her no account of the court costume this winter, as I now enjoy my liberty and retirement so much, that I have come to the resolution of not risquing them by attendance at the drawing-rooms. With affectionate regards to all at your fireside,

"I am faithfully yours,
"F. H."

CHAPTER XV.

The last days of Poets—Their duties—Mrs. Hemans' favorite books—Extracts from familiar correspondence—Scriptural studies—Miss Kemble's tragedy—Thoughts during sickness—Extracts from "Scenes and Hymns of Life"—"Norwegian Battle Song"—Cholera in Dublin—Mr. Carlyle's criticism—Irish society in town and country—"The Summer's Call"—New Year's Eve—Triumphant entry of O'Connell—Repeated attacks of illness—Fiesco—Second part of Faust—Translation of the first part—Visit from her sister—Excursion into Wicklow—New volumes of poems—Sacred poetry—Coleridge—"Scenes and Hymns of Life"—Letters to a friend entering literary life—Stories of Art—Philip van Artavelde—Death of Mrs. Fletcher—Visit to a mountain tarn—Projected visit to England—Anticipations of death—A poet's Dying Hymn—Jebb and Knox's correspondence—Silvio Pellico's "Prigione"—Coleridge's letter to his godchild—Retszch's outlines to Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

* This is the portrait prefixed to these "Memorials"—a faithful and graceful likeness.

THERE is no subject of contemplation more interesting or more impressive than the last years of the lives of poets. It is saddening, indeed, to consider how many gifted ones have been summoned from earth before their mission was accomplished: some, as it were, snatched away in the midst of a whirlwind, leaving nothing behind them save wild and forlorn fragments of song—some, sinking down exhausted by long wanderings through snares and mazes which they had wilfully and deliberately entered—some smitten with death in life, the victims of a brooding or angry madness. But, in proportion as these examples of noble spirits quenched—wasted—shattered—humble our pride in human genius and human intellect, it is gladdening to regard the progress of those, too sensitive or scornful by nature, who were permitted to live till calmness, and thought, and humility, had taken the places of passion, and waywardness, and self-approval:—who became not only willing to wait their appointed time, but earnest to do their part in serving their fellow-men, by opening the innermost treasure-chambers of truth and poetry, to the few who have eyes to see and hearts to conceive; or by singing simple and fanciful songs in the ear of the plainer day-laborer, winning him by gentle influences from the too exclusive and narrowing cares of his mechanical calling.

It is with such a feeling of satisfaction that the four years spent by Mrs. Hemans in Ireland are to be contemplated. In outward circumstances and comforts, indeed, she gained little by her change of residence. If not positively *compelled* to make her poetical talent available as a source of profit, she still felt honorably bound to exercise it unceasingly, though, by putting it forth in a fragmentary form, she was hindered from producing a work such as she felt she could now mature and execute, were time permitted her. "It has ever been one of my regrets,"* says she in one of her latest letters, "that the constant necessity of providing sums of money to meet the exegencies of the boys' education, has obliged me to waste my mind in what I consider mere desultory effusions:—

> 'Pouring myself away,
> As a wild bird, amid the foliage, turns
> That which within him thrills, and beats and burns
> Into a fleeting lay.'

* I have ventured to extract this letter from the slight but graceful remembrances of Mrs. Hemans, which Mrs. Lawrence added to a volume of her poems recently published. Was it necessary, however, to their completeness of authentication, that all *similar* memorials should be denounced as treacherous?

"My wish ever was to concentrate all my mental energy in the production of some more noble and complete work: something of pure and holy excellence, (if there be not too much presumption in the thought,) which might permanently take its place as the work of a British poetess. I have always, hitherto, written as if in the breathing-times of storms and billows." . . . .

Mrs Hemans' health, from the time she left England, was increasingly impaired by the recurrence of severe attacks of illness, with periods of convalescence few and far between; while the advancing age of the sons remaining under her care, added a new anxiety to those which already burthened her. But the years spent by her in Dublin were probably the happiest as well as the last of her life. As her mind became graver, more serene, more consistently religious, those small outward singularities,—which are remembered against her by some who can jealously or ignorantly forget the counterbalancing and guilelessness of her nature, and the beauty of her genius—fell away from her, imperceptibly. She had learned patience, experience, resignation, in her dealings with the world—in communing with her art, her mind was more than ever bent on devotedly fulfilling what she conceived to be its duties. Her idea of theses may be gathered from a passage in the papers on Goethe's Tasso—(almost the one solitary prose composition of her later years)—which was published in "the New Monthly Magazine" of January 1834, as the first of a series of "German Studies." She is speaking of the poet: "*His* nature, if the abiding place of the true light be indeed within him, is endowed above all others with the tenderest and most widely-embracing sympathies. Not alone from the things of the everlasting hills: from the storms or the silence of midnight skies, will he seek the grandeur and the beauty, which have their central residence in a far more majestic temple. . . .

. . We thus admit it essential to his high office, that the chambers of imagery in the heart of the poet must be filled with the materials moulded from the sorrows, the affections, the fiery trials, and immortal longings of the human soul. Where love, and faith, and anguish meet and contend; where the tones of prayer are wrung from the suffering spirit—*there* lies his veins of treasure; there are the sweet waters ready to flow from the stricken rock. But he will not seek them through the gaudy and hurrying masque of artificial life; he will not be the fettered Sampson to make sport for the sons and daugh-

ters of fashion. Whilst he shuns no brotherly communion with his kind, he will ever reserve to his nature the power of *self-communion*, silent hours for

> 'The harvest of a quiet eye
> That broods and sleeps on his own heart,

and inviolate retreats in the depths of his being—fountains lone and still, upon which only the eye of heaven shines down in its hallowed serenity."

The prevailing temper of her mind may be also gathered, not merely from the poems she wrote, but from the books in which she took her chief delight during the closing years of her life. She fell back with eagerness upon our elder English writers, without losing her pleasure in the works of such of her contemporaries as she esteemed heart-sound and genuine: and while a memorandum before me records the strength and refreshment she found in the discourses of Bishop Hall, and Leighton, and Jeremy Taylor—in the pages of Herbert, and Marvell, and Izaak Walton—In the eloquence and thought of two modern serious authors (I mean the Rev. Robert Hall, and the accomplished and forcible author of 'the Natural History of Enthusiasm;') it speaks also of the gratification she derived from the translations and criticisms of Mrs. Austin—from Mrs. Jameson's liberal and poetical notices of modern art, and her "Characteristics of Women"—from Mr. Bulwer's passionate and gorgeous fictions, in particular his "Last Days of Pompeii,"—and from the "Helen" of Miss Edgeworth. A tale called the "Puritan's Grave," by the late Mr Scargill, should also be mentioned as one of her favourite works of imagination. A few scattered notices of other books which she read and adopted, will be found in the following letters: and it must not be forgotten, that to the last, she took an extraordinary pleasure in all such works as describe the appearances of nature—in the sketches of Gilpin, and White of Selborne, and Miss Mitford, and the Howitts. She used fancifully to call these her "green books," and would resort to their pages for refreshment when her mind was fevered and travel-worn. A word or two more from the recollections of the chief companion of her latest years may be here introduced, as completing the picture.

"The scriptures were her daily study, and she also passed much time over the writings of some of our old divines, particularly Jeremy Taylor, for whom she had the greatest ve-

neration. As to the poetry she then loved best and read oftenest, it was beyond all comparison, Wordsworth's. Much as she had admired his writings before, they became more than ever endeared to her; and it is a fact, that during the four last years of her life, she never, except when prevented by illness, passed a single day without reading something of his. I have heard her say, that Wordsworth and Shelley were once the spirits contending to obtain the mastery over her's: that the former soon gained the ascendency, is not, I think, to be wondered at; for much as she delighted in Shelley, she pitied him still more. In defining the distinction between the genius of Wordsworth and that of Byron, I remember her saying, that it required a higher power to still a tempest than to raise one, and that she considered it the part of the former to calm, and of the latter to disturb the mind."

"While all these studies had evidently the effect of rendering her more peaceful and resigned to sorrow and pain—that extreme vivacity of spirits she had formerly possessed entirely vanished, and her delicate wit only flashed forth at intervals of rare occurrence. She seldom played during this time, save for the amusement of others; music, she said, made her so sorrowful as to be quite painful to her."

It may be thought by some that these trifling details are dwelt upon too much at length. But I have felt them necessary to the perfect understanding of the mind whose history I have attempted to trace. The extracts from her familiar correspondence may now be resumed.

"February 3rd, 1832.

. . . "I was vexed that the packet which I wished to return to you, was not ready for either of your two last messengers. I had been prevented from making it ready and writing to Miss Jewsbury, with a drawing by Charles, by the dangerous illness of my servant, (the one whom you remember as travelling with me, and for whom I have a great value,) which engrossed my attention both painfully and inconveniently almost from the day after I last wrote to you. Not liking to trust her to the care of other servants, I thought it right to nurse her a good deal myself, and had not even Charlie at home to assist me in the office of attendance. She is now, however, recovered, though I still feel the effects of the anxiety and fatigue. I received the 'Observer' quite safely, and subsequently, also, the volume by ——— of which I think exactly as you do: it certainly possesses much

cleverness—nothing more, and I was thoroughly tired of that same Phœnix ——, who seemed

> 'To lay her chain-stitched apron by,
> And have a finger in the pie'—

whenever *any* body had *any*thing to do which did not concern her. She appears a sort of general friend of 'every-body's grandmamma:' from all which collateral claims upon one I shrink too feelingly not too shudder at their introduction into works of fancy. The Bible dictionary must I imagine, be reposing in the mysterious chest, and I should be very grateful if, at your leisure, you could try to disinter it, as it would be particularly useful to me just at the present. If, in the course of the same research, you should happen to meet with an American translation of the book of Job, which, I think, may be in the same repository, I should be very glad to have it also. Now, my dear Mr. ——, I hope you will not imagine that any abstruse *polemical* discussions are to be the fruit of these requests for tomes of theologian lore: the truth is, that I am at present deriving great enjoyment from the attentive study of the Bible, in the society of a friend who reads with me, and every thing that can throw new light upon our pursuit is a source of very high gratification to both.

"Is it possible that I never mentioned Paganini to you? I ought, indeed, to have told you, how completely, and for the first time, my ——* of music was realized in hearing him;—how I seemed to be borne up into 'an ampler ether, a divine air,' whilst the spell of the mighty master was upon me. I am glad that you also felt and recognised it, as I was sure you would, because you know I have always considered you a 'much enduring man,' in having your *real* feeling of music questioned, 'probed, vexed, and criticised.' I wish I could have been near you when you thus entered the true 'music-land,' where I felt that I breathed for the first time in hearing Paganini.

. . I think ere long of writing a little dramatic poem: I should be very glad to know how you like the little scene I have taken from the life of Blake the painter, which appears in this month's Blackwood. My kindest love to all the home circle."

* The word is illegible.

TO MR. L——

"Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin,
"April 18th, 1832.

"I have just recovered from a long illness,—a weary low fever,—from which I think I should scarcely have revived, had not my spirits been calmer, and my mind happier than has for some years been the case. During part of the time when I could neither read nor listen to reading, I lay very meekly upon the sofa reciting to myself almost all the poetry I have ever read. I composed two or three melodies also; but having no one here who can help me to catch the fugitives, they have taken flight irrecoverably. I should like to know what you have been lately composing, and to what poetry. I wished much that you should have set my 'Swan and Sky-lark,' but think you cannot have received the letter in which I mentioned this desire. I have lately written what I consider one of my best pieces—'A Poet's dying Hymn:' it appeared in the last number of Blackwood: I wish that a few of the verses might strike you as being suitable for music. . . .

. . . . "Have you not been disappointed in Miss Kemble's tragedy?—to me there seems a *coarseness* of idea and expression in many parts, which for a woman is absolutely startling. I can scarcely think that it has sustaining power to bear itself up at its present height of popularity. But I must not allow my pen longer indulgence. I only wrote from an impulse to inquire after your health and welfare, and to remind you of an old friend, who is always

"Faithfully yours,

"FELICIA HEMANS."

The spirit of the last letter and of others following, in which their writer speaks of the manner in which, even upon her sick bed, she drew comfort and relief from old associations and enjoyments,—found beautiful utterance in many of her later poems. Thus, in one of the 'Scenes and Hymns of Life," we find a dying girl addressing her mother:

. . . I had lain
Silently, visited by walking dreams,
Yet conscious of thy brooding watchfulness,
Long ere I heard the sound—Hath she brought flowers?
Nay, fear not now thy fond child's waywardness,
My thoughtful mother!—in her chastened soul,
The passion-colored images of life,

Which, with their sudden, startling flush, awoke
So oft these bursting tears, have died away:
And night is there—still, solemn, holy Night,
With all her stars, and with the gentle tune
Of many fountains, low and musical,
By day unheard. . . ."

In this tone of melancholy resignation the poem proceeds. Then follow some descriptions of natural scenes and objects, fresher and more minutely-faithful than any which are to be found in Mrs. Hemans' earlier works.

. . . "this foam-like meadow sweet
Is from the cool, green, shadowy, river-nook,
Where the stream chimes around th' old mossy stones,
With sounds like childhood's laughter. Is that spot
Lovely as when our glad eyes hailed it first?
Still doth the golden willow bend, and sweep
The clear brown wave with every passing wind?
And through the shallow waters, where they lie
Dimpling in light, do the veined pebbles gleam
Like bedded gems?—And the white butterflies
From shade to sun-streak, are they glancing still
Among the poplar boughs? . . .
Ah! the pale briar rose! touched so tenderly,
As a pure ocean shell with faintest red
Melting away to pearliness! I know
How its long, light festoons o'erarching hang
From the grey rock, that rises altar-like,
With its high-waving crown of mountain-ash
'Midst the lone grassy dell. And this rich bough
Of honey'd woodbine tells me of the oak,
Whose deep midsummer gloom sleeps heavily,
Shedding a verdurous twilight o'er the face
Of the glade's pool. Methinks I see it now:
I look up through the stirring of its leaves
To the intense blue crystal firmament.
The ring-dove's wing is flitting o'er my head,
Casting at times a silvery shadow down
'Midst the large water-lillies. . . ."

"April 4th, 1832.

. . . . "You will grieve to hear that I am again writing under the pressure of fever, having had a relapse since my last letter. Dublin is very full of illness, to say nothing of the dreaded cholera, which is indeed spreading most rapidly; the alarm is, indeed, indescribable; but you know *I* am not one 'to die, many times before my death,' of *fear* at least, and my spirits are, on my own account, perfectly composed. I did indeed enter into all your feelings of regret and indignation, excited by those miserable remarks in ———! and to think they should proceed from the pen which afterwards wrote—'*Poets are the guardians of admiration in the hearts*

of the people;'—but I am not now equal to the expression of all I feel on a subject of such deep interest to us both."

TO MR. L———

"Upper Pembroke Street, May 9th, 1832.

"My dear ———

"I was delighted to hear from you again, especially as the letter to which you allude never reached me, and I had therefore been an unusually long time without any tidings of you. I am writing to you, literally, from a 'city of the plague.' I cannot describe the strange thrill of awe which possessed me, on seeing, a few days since, one of the black covered litters which convey infected persons to those places over which might almost be inscribed Dante's

'*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che'ntrate.*'

The gloomy vehicle went past my windows followed by policemen armed with staves to keep off the populace. Nothing ever pressed so forcibly upon me the dark *reality* of some evil power sweeping by, like the destroying Angel of Scripture. My spirits are, however, perfectly composed, and I have not the least intention of taking flight, which so many others are doing in all directions; the idea of terror for *myself* would never occur to me, and I should suffer far more from leaving those I love in any danger, than from sharing it with them.

"To pass from this dreary subject. . . . The next time I write, I will send you 'a very fierce thing,' as my little boys used to call such compositions, a Norwegian battle-song, which I lately wrote, and which was suggested by an old northern tradition. I am sure it will find accordant tones in your music, or rather a power to give it life. I am much pleased to hear that the melody of 'Go forth, for she is gone,' indebted as it was greatly to you, has met with some approbation. The 'Good-night,' is so simple, both in words and melody, that it might perhaps please the public taste, which does not seem very recondite. My sister is quite enchanted with the music of the Chevalier Neukomm, and mentions it in every one of her letters. As I have chosen you for my musical guide in taste, I should be glad to hear your opinion of it. . . . . I have not yet made an attempt to *cage* any of

my lately-composed melodies. My illness has left me with such a tendency to head-ache, that I am obliged to give myself up still in a great measure to the '*dolce far niente*,' for which it is at least satisfactory to have so good an excuse.

"Ever believe me most truly yours,

"F. H."

"If you have not yet read 'Eugene Aram,' pray do so. It is a work of power and pathos."

"I have been in a state of great nervous suffering ever since I last wrote to you; it is as if I felt, and more particularly *heard*, everything with *unsheathed* nerves; a most troublesome increase of capacities to which I can only hope that my dying some day 'in aromatic pain,' will effectually put an end. There is a line of Coleridge's

'O! for a sleep, for *sleep itself* to rest in!'

I believe I shall require some such *quintessence* of repose to restore me. I have several literary plans for fulfilment as soon as my health allows. I enjoy much more leisure here than was the case in England, which is at least *one* great advantage."

August 27th. 1832.

"My dear Friend,

"Do not imagine that I am worse because of these pencilled characters, but the act of stooping to write has been for several months so hurtful to me, that I have at length determined on adopting this method, until the painful tendency of blood to the head from which I have been suffering seems to be conquered. . . . . If you find my letters legible in this present form, they will not retard my recovery, as I can write them whilst reclining backward. How I thank you for trusting me as you do! If I were not to write for a twelvemonth, you would never doubt my faithful remembrance, and *you would have no cause*. . . . . I thank you for directing me to the paper on Bos-

well's Johnson in Fraser: had it not been for your recommendation I should never have opened the Magazine. . . . . But this one article, with its manly, sincere, true English feeling, did indeed well repay me; I prefer it to any thing I have read of Carlyle's since that delightful paper on Burns: but I must own I am sometimes out of patience with the fantastic *falso*-Gothic of his style; it makes all his writings seem like a very bad translation of fine German thoughts. I have been living amid fearful scenes since I last wrote to you: the dark angel of the pestilence has been sweeping down high and low; and is again returned among us, apparently after having retreated. There is every reason to suppose, from the habits of this strange and reckless people, that it will take deep root among them, and long be the upas-tree of Irish soil. Your Polish chief would interest me greatly, but do not advise his coming to Dublin unless he has private or personal reasons. The public attention of this place is wholly divided between party politics and fashionable rivalries, nothing else has the least chance of awakening it. You will long ago, I think have discovered that I dislike Ireland. I have, indeed, continued but for one or two friends, but they are very dear ones, 'a stranger and a sojourner in this land,' and I daily withdraw more and more from its glaring, noisy, and unintellectual society. Pray tell me when you write whether you can decypher my hand in this form. It will spare me much suffering if my friends will for a time receive my correspondence thus.

"Ever most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

In another letter, dated from the country where she was casually visiting, Mrs. Hemans writes with something of her old playfulness.

"The society of the neighbourhood seems as *borne* as usual in most country places. I appear to be regarded as rather a 'curious thing;' the gentlemen treat me as I suppose they would the muse Calliope, were she to descend amongst them; that is, with much *solemn* reverence, and constant allusions to poetry; the ladies, every time I happen to speak, look as if they expected sparks of fire, or some other marvellous thing, would proceed from my lips, as from those of the Sea-Princess in Arabian fiction. If I were in higher spirits, I should be strongly tempted to do something *very* strange amongst them, in

order to fulfil the ideas I imagine they entertain of that altogether foreign monster, a *Poetess*, but I feel too much subdued for such *capricci* at present."

After recording the opinon here expressed of Irish society, there is every temptation to name the exceptions, "the near and dear friends," whose companionship was a compensation for its deficiencies. But those only whose names are already before the world, can, with any propriety, be particularized. With the family of Sir William, then Professor Hamilton, Mrs. Hemans held frequent and friendly intercourse: in Colonel D'Aguilar, she found an accomplished companion in the hours of health, a steadfast friend in the time of sickness; and one of the sonnets, published among her Poetical Remains, addressed to the venerable Dr. Percival, commemorates another highly-prized intimacy. It is affecting to think, that he to whom it is addressed, should have survived the writer.

> "Not long thy voice amongst us may be heard
> Servant of God! thy day is almost done,—
> The charm now hung upon thy look and word
> Is that which lingers round the setting sun,
> A power which bright decay hath meekly won,
> Still from revering love." . . . .

"August, 1832.

. . . . "In my literary pursuits I fear I shall be obliged to look out for a regular amanuensis. I sometimes retain a piece of poetry several weeks in my memory from actual dread of writing it down. But enough of this long explanation, the very length of which, however, you must consider as a proof how much I desire you to think of me as unchanged. . . How sorry I was not to see your friend Neukomm! We were playing at cross-purposes the whole time of his stay in Dublin; but I *did* hear his organ playing, and glorious it was,—a mingling of many powers. I sent, too, for the volume you recommended to me, the 'Saturday Evening:' surely it is a noble work, so rich in the *thoughts that create thoughts*. I am so glad you liked my little summer-breathing song,* I

* The song is "The Summer's Call," afterwards published among the National Lyrics. In the music of its versification and the luxury

assure you it quite consoled me for the want of natural objects of beauty around to heap up their remembered images in one wild strain. The dark pestilence has re-appeared among us. 'Oh! there have been such sights within our streets!' Well, dear Cousin, farewell, most kindly; I do beg you to trust in your unchanged friend,

"F. H."

"20, Dawson Street, January 29, 1833.

"I had begun a letter to you so long since, that having been interrupted both by illness and the weariness of another removal, it appeared quite *passee* when I again looked at its commencement, and I determined upon writing another; I was, indeed, grieved to think of your having been so seriously ill, and to feel that distance now prevented me from trying to cheer you more effectively than by a letter: and my own state of health is such as to cause me frequently great distress and inconvenience. I do not mean so much from the actual *suffering* attendant upon it, as from its making the exertion of writing, at times, not merely irksome, but positively painful to me; this is, I believe, caused entirely by irregular action of

of its natural imagery, it would be difficult to find its superior in modern poetry. The following two verses, I think, justify this high praise

* * * *

"All the air is filled with sound,
Soft, and sultry, and profound;
Murmurs through the shadowy grass,
Lightly stray;
Faint winds whisper as they pass—
Come away!
Where the bee's deep music swells
From the trembling fox-glove bells,
Come away!

* * * *

Now each tree by summer crowned
Sheds its own rich twilight round;
Glancing there from sun to shade,
Bright wings play;
There the deer its couch hath made—
Come away!
Where the smooth leaves of the lime
Glisten in their honey-time—
Come away—away!

the heart, which affects my head with oppressive fullness, and sudden flushing of the cheeks and temples. All my pursuits are thus constantly interfered with; but I do not wish this to convey to you the language of *complaint*, I am only anxious that it should give assurance of kind and grateful recollection; that it should convince you of my being unchanged in cordial interest, and silent only from causes beyond my power to overrule. I thought of you all, and of you especially, on New Year's eve, which I always used to pass at your hearth. I remembered my own place on the sofa, my little table, and the kindly 'familiar faces' which used to surround it, and I spoke affectionately of these things to a friend who passed the evening with me. Do not suppose it possible that my mind could be alienated from these memories, though circumstances the most singular, perhaps, in all my troubled life, have bound me to a land of strangers, a land of storm and perplexity. . . I witnessed some days since a very remarkable I might say *portentous*, scene—the procession of O'Connell through the city after his victory. He was attended by not less, it is computed, than a hundred thousand followers. There is something fearfully grand in the gathering of such a multitude. A harper, with harp of the old national form, and many insignia of ancient Ireland, preceded his triumphal car, and the tri-color (much at variance with all these antique associations) was displayed in every form around him. But nothing struck me more in the whole strange procession than the countenance of the demagogue himself; it was stern, sullen, full of *suppressed storm*, instead of any thing like triumphal expression: it is said, that he feared an attempt at assassination that very day; certainly the character of his countenance was dark and inscrutable. . . . . I am at present lodging in the house of some devoted Catholics; they have an altar in the house, with a Madonna, before which candles are set every night. I could almost have fancied myself in Mrs. Ratcliffe's visionary world when I first made the discovery. I wish you were likely to visit Dublin again; but pray write if it be not hurtful to you, and tell me of yourself, and that you think of me with the same interest as ever. I am commencing a volume of sacred poetry, 'Hymns of Life' I call them, as they are to take a wide range of thought and subject. If you have seen any of my late pieces tell me your thoughts of them. My kindest regards to ——; I will write to him in a day or two. When he knows that I was obliged to remove almost immediately

after hearing from him, he will not wonder that I did not write before. My love to —— and dear ——."

Early in 1833, Mrs. Hemans was again severely attacked by illness, which interrupted her correspondence with her English friends.

Dawson Street, March 17, 1833.

"I am sure you will have real pleasure in hearing that I begin to feel something like symptoms of reviving health; perseverance in the quiescent system, which seems almost essential to my *life*, is producing by slow degrees, the desired effect. You must not think that it is my own fault if this system is ever departed from. I desire nothing but a still, calm, meditative life; but this is exactly what my position, obliged as I am 'to breast a stormy world alone,' most precludes me from. *Hence*, I truly believe, and from no original disorder of constitution arises *all* that I have to bear of sickness and nervous agitation. Certainly, before this last and severest attack, I had gone through enough of annoyance and even personal fatigue, to try a far more robust frame; imagine three removals, and these *Irish* removals, for me, between October and January! Each was unavoidable, but I am now, I trust settled with people of more civilized habits, and think myself likely to remain here quietly. How difficult it is, amidst these weary, heart-wearing narrow cares, to keep bright and pure the immortal spark within! Yet I strive, above all things, to be true in *this*, and turn, with even deeper and more unswerving love, to the holy 'spirit-land,' and guard it with more and more of watchful care, from the intrusion of all that is heartless and worldly. I find Milton, and Wordsworth, and Channing, my ministering angels in this resolve. I scarcely pass a day without communion with some of their thoughts—thoughts fit indeed to 'hand down the lamp of life' from one age to another; and oh, how much needed in *this!* Dr. Channing, I fear, is not pleased with me for my long silence. . . . I am very glad you kindly told him of my present illness. . . . You cannot conceive the difficulty of procuring respectable, and at all private, lodgings in Dublin; every thing is for show and fashion, *nothing* for domestic feeling and delicate health. I could not help making an observation to an Irish friend this morning, which was admitted to be *most* characteristic of this country, that *domestic* taste and habits *here* require as much

apology as dissipated ones in England. Fiesco* was performed in the public theatre here, and, considering the undramatic taste of the place, very well received; it was *splendidly got up* as to scenery, &c. &c., but the closing scene has a very bad effect in performance, and quite convinced me that a hero should never be seen *tumbling down*. The whole was, of course, greatly curtailed. I wish I had room to describe to you the ludicrous effect produced by a rouged, stuffed man, who recited my poor prologue, flourishing a large cocked-hat in an irresistible manner, to grace all my best passages. But my head will not allow me to add more than that I am ever,

"Most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

"Do remember me kindly to the Howitts. I quite love all they write."

The next letter of the series speaks more despondingly of the future. After having entered at length into the question of establishing one of her sons in mercantile life, Mrs. Hemans writes—

"I know not that I can make for him any better choice than that of this profession, and the many warnings, which my health gives me, and the increasing reluctance of my spirit (which seems withdrawing itself more and more strongly from earthly things as my health declines) to cope with worldly difficulties, make me very anxious to do what I can 'whilst it is yet day.' . . . . To speak of brighter things, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sending you, as in the good days of the Saturday's post, the enclosed letter for your delectation. When you have read and laughed at it—for laugh you cannot help—pray give it to —— to enrich a little store of such originalities, which I believe he is collecting. Is my geranium still blooming? You have not told me of it for a long time." . . . . .

"June 15th, 1833.

"My dear Mr.——,

"How grieved and vexed I was to miss —— you may well

* This play, it will be remembered, was translated by Colonel D'Aguilar.

imagine, and to miss him, too, in consequence of so complete a mistake, for I had only driven for a few miles into the country on the morning of his visit. Will you tell him that my friend —— went on the same evening to the hotel where his note was dated, in order to make every inquiry respecting him, but could get no further intelligence until I received his *second* note. I troubled you lately with the care of a letter to ——, from the sight of which you would augur some improvement in my health, which, indeed, I have cause gratefully to acknowledge, though I continue my habit of writing as much with pencil as I can, finding the attitude far less injurious to me than that required by pen and ink. I longed for you very much a few days since, when the newly-published conclusion of 'Faust' was sent to me by a very kind German acquaintance I have lately met with. But alas! alas! my poor feminine intellects were soon nearly as much bewildered as those of our good ——, by *'that celestial colloquy sublime!'* once held with Coleridge, and though I do not, like him, pique myself upon the 'clearness of my ideas,' I really was obliged to give up the perusal, finding the phantasmagoria it called up before my eyes, rapid and crowded enough almost to give me a fever. I mean to try it again, as my German friends advises me, but I shall need the assistance of the fairy *Order* herself to clear my way through the mazy dance of Ariel, the Sylphs, Helen of Greece, Thales, Xenocrates, Baucis, Philemon, the Sphinx, Mary Magdalen, the woman of Samaria, and all the other personages, divine and human, whose very names throng the pages so as to make me dizzy. Have you seen ——'s prose translation of the *earlier* Faust? What think you of its spirit? He seems, in my opinion, to have rather too much of the Mephistophiles spirit about *himself*, to enter fully into the spirit of Faust. At least, there is something so very ungracious in his heaping together the blunders of all former translators, in order to raise himself upon the pile, (like the *bridge of dead men*, in one of Joanna Baillie's tragedies, described as the path over which to enter the besieged city,) that I am not inclined to give him 'a single sous' of my good will. . . . . Do tell me whether you find any difficulty in reading my pencil despatches. I certainly ought not to add to your plagues in this way." . . . . .

The autumn of the year 1833 was most happily varied to

Mrs. Hemans, by a very short visit from her sister. "Delightful, indeed," writes the latter, "was it to meet after so long a separation; but I found my dear sister sadly worn and faded, and her health very fragile, though she rallied wonderfully, and was quite her old self while we were with her. . . . . She is at present occupied, when at all able to write, on a collection of sacred lyrics, and what she has named "Hymns of Life," and her mind is stored with many other projects, if it please God to grant health for their accomplishment. In another letter, written after Mrs. Hemans' decease, reference is made to this visit. "It is indeed true, that she had not reached the full strength of her powers. Much as I had previously known of the wonderful resources of her mind, I was impressed and astonished, during our visit to Dublin a year and a half ago, by its developments and inspirations. . . . . Little did I think how soon that awful curtain was to fall, which separates us, still busied from our earthly cares, from those who

'Their worldly task have done,
Home have gone, and ta'en their wages.'

"These very words she repeated to me one day while I was with her, as what might soon be applicable to herself, and the circumstance of her sinking to rest on the Saturday evening, brought them most touchingly back to my remembrance."

The later months of this year were busily spent by Mrs. Hemans in arranging and preparing for publication the three collections of poems which made their appearance in the course of the following spring and summer. The first of these were the "Hymns for Childhood," and the "National Lyrics, and Songs for Music." Having already spoken of Mrs. Hemans' skill and sweetness as a song-writer, and of her happiness in perceiving and appropriating the most striking traits of national character, I shall only linger over the last-mentioned volume to point out one poem of singular beauty which it contains—"The Haunted House." The "Scenes and Hymns of Life," however, must not be passed so hastily. The strong desire which had recently possessed their author, to devote her powers to compositions of the highest and holiest order, has been indicated in the foregoing letters. It is almost needless to observe, that her mind, naturally of too fine a structure, and too keen a vision, to be possessed for an instant by sectarianism, was expanded, and not narrowed, by

an increased conscientiousness of motive and loftiness of aim; that she was more than ever incapable of adding to the number of those familiar and fulsome versions of Scripture so presumptuously thrust forward, and so ignorantly accepted as sacred poetry. She wished to enlarge its sphere,—to use her own words—"by associating, with its themes, more of the emotions, the affectious and even the purer imaginative enjoyments of daily life, than had hitherto been admitted within the hallowed circle." And the fulfilment of this high purpose was beautifully shadowed forth, if not wholly executed, in the "Scenes and Hymns of Life." None, however, who have ever written, have suffered from self-distrust more severely then she did, from feeling the impossibility of doing justice to her own conceptions, of giving adequate utterance to the thoughts which arose within her, all the more brightly and fervently as she approached the close of her career.

"They float before my soul, the fair designs
Which I would body forth to life and power,
Like clouds, that with their wavering hues and lines
Portray majestic buildings: dome and tower,
Bright spire that through the rainbow and the shower
Points to th' unchanging stars; and high arcade,
Far sweeping to some glorious altar, made
For holiest rites: meanwhile the waning hour
Melts from me, and by fervent dreams o'er wrought
I sink."*

And in a letter written about the same time as the sonnet whence the above lines are taken, she says, "I find in the Athenæum, of last week, a brief but very satisfactory notice of the 'Scenes and Hymns:' the volume is recognised as my best work, and the course it opens out called a 'noble path.' My heart is growing faint—shall I have power given me to tread that way much further? I trust that God may make me at least submissive to his will, whatever that may be." She would also say, that could she ever equal Coleridge's "Hymn in the Valley of Chamouni," which she considered as the perfection of sacred poetry, she could desire nothing more. It cannot be said that she ever reached the excellence of that noble production, but she approached it in some of her latest poems—in the "Easter Day in a Mountain Churchyard,"—

* "Desires and Performances," written in the autumn of 1834, and printed among Mr. Hemans' "Poetical Remains."

and yet more closely in the last and greatest of her lyrics, "Despondency and Aspiration."

This volume of "Scenes and Hymns of Life" contains also many beautiful sonnets, or, more strictly speaking, quatuorzains; for in none of them are the rigorous and characteristic forms of the legitimate sonnet observed. In this vein of composition, hitherto unworked by her, Mrs. Hemans found a welcome resource. She could often record her passing thoughts, the precious solace of her sick-bed, in the small compass of a sonnet, when she would have been unable to summon her energies for the completion of a longer work. It had now become her habits to dictate her poems; and she would sometimes compose and perfect long passages, or even entire lyrics, and retain them in her memory many days before they were committed to paper.

But the interest with which she threw herself upon these new projects, did not so far engross her as to prevent her from sympathizing in the good or evil fortune which befel her friends; or from bearing a part, when it was possible, in forwarding their plans and wishes. Of this, the letters with which the memorials of the year 1834 open offer a sufficient proof; the apology for the publication of passages so exclusively personal, has been already made, and I hope accepted.

The next passage,—the last lively extract that these pages will contain,—refers to an excursion into Wicklow, undertaken about this time.

"August, 1833.

"I did not forget my promise to write last night, but the weariness following another day of difficulty and disappointment, took away from me all power of fulfilment. I am sure you will be sorry to hear that I have not yet been able to leave the inn, as all the places to which I have been directed proved so many will-o'-the-wisps, only luring me on to one fatigue after another. Mr. Martin's lodge, Mr. Keegan's cottage, &c. &c., have all vanished from the earth (if ever they *had* 'a local habitation and a name') as completely as Aladdin's palace; and as for Messrs. Martin and Keegan themselves, I suspect them verily to be cavern-haunting rebel leaders, of whom it is thought politic to be entirely ignorant; so stoutly did the people in the neighbourhood of the waterfall deny any knowledge of any such characters. Had I been in

better spirits, I could have been much amused with the humours of my driver, which far out-Heroded even those of Mr. Donnelly himself; he was a loquacious old man, combining into singularly original harmony the several characteristics of Methodist, Irishman, and sailor, in each of which capacities he seemed to conceive a sort of paternal interest for the welfare of my soul and body—Ay, ma'am dear, I'll do my best for you; 'I'll help you to quiet quarters; truly a hotel that gentlemen come into singing their *sinful songs* all through the night, is no place for a lady like you. Now, look to your *starboard* side, ma'am, and tell me, would you just like that cottage?' Then his piece of parting advice—"Now, just get yourself a comfortable dinner, and don't ask for any *port wine*, for it's confounded bad you'll get it. I'll tell you the truth, that I will; it's little encouragement *my* master gives me to tell any thing else for him.' I am afraid I have lost a great many precious pearls of eloquence, but the above will give you some idea of their character. The scenery round the waterfall, though of exquisite beauty, is much spoiled, to my taste, by the lounging, eating, and flirting groups, who disturb what nature meant to be the depth of stillness and seclusion. I have heard of another cottage this evening, respecting which Anna is gone to inquire; whether it be called up solely by the Irish spirit of invention, (which I am now convinced can raise up cottages and lodges, when demanded, as readily as a southern improvisatore calls up rhymes,) remains to be proved. If I am again disappointed, I think I shall, perhaps, examine the neighbourhood of Bray to-morrow. I dislike an inn so much, and always feel so particularly forlorn in such places, that I shall, if unsuccessful, return very soon to Dublin. I am certainly in all things of this nature, at least since I came to Ireland, a female 'Murad the Unlucky,' and nature evidently intended me for his wife. . . . . I hope you will not find this written with the very worst pen (I will not say 'the worst *inn's* worst pen,') an inn can produce, wholly illegible."

"Jan. 26, 1834.

. . . , "I scarcely know, my dear ———, whether or not to congratulate you on having at last so gallantly launched yourself upon the tumultuous, yet dazzling, sea—which has been so long the arena of your hopes. . . . . .
. . . I only fear that you may sometimes want some

one like your old friend to be near you, 'to babble of green fields' and primroses, and win you back occasionally to childhood and nature, and all fresh and simple thoughts,—from those gorgeous images of many-coloured artificial life by which you will be surrounded, and which may possibly, at first, seize on your spirit with irresistible sway. But I am convinced that nothing really worthy and *permanent* in literature (such as I sincerely think you have the power with steadfast purpose to achieve) is ever built up except on the basis of simplicity; and I am sure that the widest reach of knowledge will always have the blessed tendency to make us more and more like 'little children' in this respect. But you will think I am going to take up one of my old lectures on *your love of the gorgeous*, to which you used so dutifully to listen in the days of the Imp Mazurka. Have you forgotten that last precious flight of fancy, which still startles all my musical visiters when they open the 'litel boke' from which its necromantic visage stares into their astonished eyes? . . . You will not, I think, be sorry to hear that many of your favourite old friends among my compositions, such as 'The Rhine Song,' 'The Song of Delos,' 'Last Lay of Sappho,' &c. &c., are about to appear in a little volume published here, and entitled 'National Lyrics, and Songs for Music.' . . . . I have many literary plans, which I am sure would interest you. I have to thank my God, who keeps the fountain of high thoughts still I trust, unsoiled and unexhausted in my secret soul. Accept my sincere, I may say affectionate, wishes for your well-being in all things, and believe me, with an interest in your career of which you must never doubt,

"Your faithful friend,

"F. H."

"When you write to the Howitts, I wish you would give my very kind remembrance to Mary: I read every thing of theirs that I can meet with."

Feb. 9, 1834.

. . . . "I cannot now enter into many particulars of your letter, which gave me sincere pleasure, and have satisfied me that many of the dangers I feared for you no longer exist. I delight in the idea of your 'Stories of Art,' particularly the thought relating to the Middle Ages, the spirit of which, in art, particularly in some of their grand, thoughtful, monumental memorials, has never, I think, been duly appreciated. Did

you ever read a description of that majestic and singular monument of Maximilian II., I think, surrounded with its awful battalion of colossal bronze figures, in a church at Inspruck? I think you might connect some very striking tale, with a work so impressive and comparatively so little known." . . .

"May 8, 1834.

. . . "Let me not forget to tell you how sensibly I was touched by your kind offer of resigning to me your long-cherished fancy, the 'Tales of Art.'* . . I could not, however, for many reasons, avail myself of this sacrifice on your part, my dear friend. I have now passed through the feverish, and somewhat *visionary*, state of mind, often connected with the passionate study of art in early life;—deep affection and deep sorrows seem to have solemnized my whole being, and I now feel as if bound to higher and holier tasks, which, though I may occasionally lay aside, I could not long wander from without some sense of dereliction. I am sure you can well understand, and will not fail to enter into, all this: I hope it is no self-delusion, but I cannot help sometimes feeling as if it were my true task to enlarge the sphere of sacred poetry, and extend its influence. When you receive my volume of 'Scenes and Hymns,' you will see what I mean by enlarging its sphere, though my plans are as yet imperfectly developed. . . I am grown, as you will have observed, extremely fond of the sonnet: I think the practice of writing it very improving, both as to concentration of thought and facility of language." . . .

"May 4, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"A very long interval has elapsed since I last wrote to you. I know well that no such interval will ever lessen your unfailing interest in me, and that you will hear with pleasure of its having been one of tranquillity, at least *comparative*.

* A rumor had gone abroad that Mrs. Hemans was meditating a prose work; and the writer was anxious to turn her attention to a subject which he believed to be in consonance with her own tastes, to which none could have done more thorough justice than herself.

It certainly has not passed without some improvement in my health of body and mind, and I sometimes even fancy that a new spring of energy is, or yet *will* be, given to both, from the strong hopes and aspirations which occasionally spring up within me, when the overbearing pressure of external circumstances is a little removed. I have been busily employed in the completion of what I do hope you will think my best volume—the 'Scenes and Hymns of Life:' though Blackwood's impatience to bring it out speedily has rather prevented my developing the plan as completely as I have wished. I regard it, however, as an undertaking to be carried on and thoroughly wrought out during several years; as the more I look for indications of the connexion between the human spirit and its eternal Source, the more extensively I see those traces open before me, and the more indelibly they appear stamped upon our mysterious nature. I cannot but think that my mind has both expanded and strengthened during the contemplation of such things, and that it will thus by degrees arise to a higher and purer sphere of action than it has yet known. If any years of peace and affection be granted to my future life, I think I may prove that the *discipline of storms* has, at least, not been without purifying and ennobling influence. I shall not have wearied you, my dear friend, by what would have seemed mere egotism to most others, but I always feel, with reference to *you*, that your regard is really best repaid by a true unfolding of my mind, with its unchangeable inner life." . . .

"May, 1834.

"I have been really *cheered* and delighted by some passages, of a new work—'Philip van Artavelde'—and more particularly by parts of its noble preface contained in the Athenæum of to-day. I feel assured that you will greet as gladly as myself the rising up of what appeared to be a majestic mind amongst us; and the putting forth of really strengthening and elevating views respecting the high purposes of intellectual power. I have already sent to order the book, feeling that it will be quite an addition to the riches of *my mental estate*. . . .

It was about this time that, after a long and anxious period of suspense and silence, the rumour of the death of one of

Mrs. Hemans' most attached friends, which had for some time been whispered about was confirmed by the arrival of letters from India. The last communications which had passed between Mrs. Fletcher and her English friends, had been so full of life and expectation—the artless and graphic journals of one to whom every strange object suggested a new thought, or supplied a new spring of exertion—that it was difficult to believe that so eager a spirit was laid at rest for ever—on the threshold, as it were, of scenes and duties which must have called forth all its powers. The fragments immediately following, from letters addressed by Mrs. Hemans to different friends, refer to this melancholy event. The repetitions they contain, evidence the sincerity of their writer's regret.

"June 28th, 1834.

"I was, indeed, deeply and permanently affected by the untimely fate of one so gifted, and so affectionately loving me, as our poor lost friend. It hung the more heavily upon my spirits as the subject of death and the mighty future had so many times been that of our most confidential communion. How much deeper power seemed to lie *coiled up*, as it were, in the recesses of her mind, than was ever manifested to the world in her writings! Strange and sad does it seem, that only the broken music of such a spirit has been given to the earth—the full and finished harmony never drawn forth! Yet I would rather, a thousand times, that she should have perished thus, in the path of her chosen duties, than have seen her become the merely brilliant creature of London literary life, living upon those poor *sycces de societe*, which I think utterly ruinous to all that is lofty, and holy, and delicate in the nature of a highly-endowed woman." . .

"I was ill in bed all yesterday from having walked too much and got a little wet, but am now a good deal better, though my spirits have been depressed ever since the tidings of my poor friend's death arrived. I never expected to meet her again in this life, but there was a strong chain of interest between us, that spell of *mind on mind*, which, once formed, can never be broken. I felt, too, that my whole nature was understood and appreciated by her, and this is a sort of happiness which I consider the most rare in all earthly affection. Those who feel and think deeply, whatever playfulness of

manner may brighten the *surface* of their character, are fully *unsealed* to the very few indeed. You must not be surprised to see me wearing a slight mourning when we meet; I know she would have put it on for me. Dearest ——, I could say much more to you on her character, and my own feelings with regard to her loss—they have been the more solemn from this cause—that the subject of death and the mighty future had been many times that of our deepest conversation. With all my regret, I had rather a thousand times, that she had perished thus in the path of her duties and the brightness of her *improving* mind, than become, what I once feared was likely, the merely brilliant creature of London life: *that* is, indeed, a worthless lot for a nobly-gifted woman's nature! I send you the second volume of 'Phantasmagoria,' since you liked the first, but it was the production of quite an immature mind, in a youth which had many disadvantages."

"July, 1834.

. . . . "Will you tell Mr. Wordsworth this anecdote of poor Mrs. Fletcher? I am sure it will interest *him*. During the time that the famine in the Deccan was raging she heard that a poor Hindoo woman had been found lying dead in one of the temples at the foot of an idol, and with a female child, still living, in her arms. She and her husband immediately repaired to the spot, took the poor little orphan away with them, and conveyed it to their own home. She tended it assiduously, and one of her last cares was to have it placed at a female missionary school, to be brought up as a Christian. My sister informs me that her terror of death seemed quite subdued at the last, and that she sank away quite calmly, in utter exhaustion." . . . . .

"July 4th, 1834.

"You will, I know, be glad to hear that I am now much better than when Charles wrote to you. I was not well when the news of our poor friend's death arrived, and was much overcome by it, and almost immediately afterwards, —— coming to Dublin, I was obliged to exert myself in a way altogether at variance with my feelings. All these causes have thrown me back a good deal, but I am now sur-

mounting them, and was yesterday able to make one of a party in an excursion to a little mountain *tarn* about twelve miles from Dublin. The strangely deserted character of the country long before this object is reached, indeed at only seven or eight miles distance from the metropolis, is quite astonishing to English eyes. A wide mountain-tract of country, in many parts without a sign of human life, or trace of culture or habitation as far as the sight can reach—magnificent views bursting upon you every now and then, but all deep solitude, and the whole traversed by a noble road, a military work I was told, the only object of which seemed to be a large barrack in the heart of the hills, now untenanted, but absolutely necessary for the safety of Dublin not many years since. Then we reached a little lake, lying clear, and still, and dark, but sparkling all over to the sun, as with innumerable fire-flies, high green hills sweeping down without shore or path, except on one side, into its very bosom, and all round the same deep silence. I was only sorry that *one* dwelling, and that, of all things, a cottage *orne*, stood on its bank; for though it was like a scene of enchantment to enter and look upon the lonely pool and solemn mountains, through the coloured panes of a richly-carved and oak-pannelled apartment, still the charm of nature was in some degree broken by the association of wealth and refinement. But how my imagination is carrying me away in the effort to give you some idea of the lone and wild Lough Bray! I must return to worldly matters, as I was obliged to do from the wild hills and waters yesterday. I was somewhat surprised at . . . . . rather an ungentlemanly review of my 'Lyrics'—the first indeed of the kind of which I ever *knew* myself to be the object. Very probably there may be more such in existence, but you know my habitual indifference to such things, (now greatly increased,) and I scarcely ever read any remarks upon myself either in praise or otherwise. Certainly no critic will ever have to boast of inflicting my death-blow. . . . . She (Mrs. Fletcher) has, indeed, been taken away in the very prime of her intellectual life, when every moment seemed fraught with new treasures of knowledge and power, but I fully agree with you that she was not born for earthly happiness:—alas! and those who *are*, can they hope to find it? I shall have wearied you, my dear friend, and will say farewell."

"July, 1834.

. . . "Since I wrote last, I have read Philip van Artavelde. It is a fine thoughtful work, but certainly, I think, rather wanting—as one might perhaps expect—in those ingredients of imagination and passion, which, though their value as the *sole* element of poetry has been overrated, yet will always be felt to constitute *essential* ones. The intellect is constantly excited by this author to examine, reflect, and combine; but the heart is seldom awakened; and I cannot think him a master-poet, who does not sway both those regions, though to few is given an equal domination over them. Shakspeare, however, possessed it; and those who take him for their model, have no right to exalt *any one* poetic faculty at the expense of the others."

August 6th, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"I fear I shall have caused you a little anxiety, which I much regret, as *you*, I know, will regret my heavy disappointment, when I tell you that I have been obliged sorrowfully to give up the hope of visiting England at present.* Whether from the great exertions I had made to clear away all my wearisome correspondence, and arrange my affairs, so as to give myself a month's holiday with a free conscience, or from the intense heat of weather which has long greatly oppressed me, I know not; but my fever, which had not been quite subdued, returned upon me the very day I last wrote to you, and in a very few hours rose to such a height, that my strength was completely prostrated. I am now pronounced, and indeed feel myself, quite unfit for the possible risk of the passage, and subsequent travelling by coach; and

* Mrs. Hemans had been intending to revisit the Lakes. Perhaps the natural disappointment at being compelled to relinquish a favourite plan, made her somewhat uncharitable to the far-famed scenery within her reach;—for in an extract from another letter, written about this time, she says:—

"Last week I was induced to go for four days into Wicklow again. We got as far as the Vale of Avoca, which I think has been rather overrated. The only thing I can say I enjoyed in the least, was a walk I took in the wildest part of Glenmalure, which I thought more like Wales than any other part of Wicklow: something about the green solitude seemed *native* to me."

am going this very day, or rather in the cool of the evening, a few miles into the county of Wicklow, for immediate change of air. If my health improve in a day or two, I shall travel on very quietly to get more amongst the mountains, the fresh, wild, *native* air of which is to me always an *elixir vitæ:* but I am going under much depression of feeling, both from my keen sense of disappointment, and because I hate wandering about by myself. I will not, however, sadden you by dwelling upon these things. . . Will you give my very kind regards to ——? he must have known how the 'cares of this world,' though without their accompaniment of the 'deceitfulness of riches,' have long entangled me, and will, I am sure, forgive a silence which has thus been caused, and which I have long intended to break." . . .

A few letters immediately following the above are before me, but it is out of my power to publish any extracts from them, from their constant reference to the party to whom they are addressed: and I hardly regret that I am so prevented, for the melancholy of the series deepens as it draws near its close. They speak of failing health, accompanied by such depression as makes "the grasshopper a burden," and of a mother's affectionate anxiety concerning those whom she was so soon to leave. But it is remarkable and soothing to observe the calmness and gentle resignation which gathered round their writer as she approached the close of her life. At an earlier period of her career, it would seem as if, in the times of despondency which alternated with her gayer hours, she had contemplated death as a deliverer—the grave, a resting-place earnestly to be desired. She frequently referred to that touching epitaph, "*Implora pace*," mentioned in one of Lord Byron's letters, as the words she would wish to be inscribed on her own monument.* In the poems, written in her most *chevalresque* mood, some indication of this sentiment may always be traced. Thus in the "Siege of Valencia,"—

* This line of Pindemonte's was transcribed by her, at a later period, in a book of manuscript extracts, belonging to a friend:—

"Fermossi al fin il cor che balzo tanto."

Above was written, "Felicia Hemans' epitaph."

"Why should not He, whose touch dissolves our chain,
Put on his robes of beauty when he comes
As a deliverer? He hath many forms,
They should not all be fearful! If his call
Be but our gathering to that distant land
For whose sweet waters we have pined with thirst,
Why should not its prophetic sense be borne
Into the heart's deep stillness, with a breath
Of summer-winds—a voice of melody
Solemn yet lovely? . . .
—Joy! for the peasant, when his vintage-task
Is closed at eve! But most of all, for her,
Who, when her life had changed his glittering robes
Nor the dull garb of sorrow, which doth cling
So heavily around the journeyers on,
Cast down its weight and slept." . . .

If such was Mrs. Heman's feeling with respect to death, while in the spring-time of her genius, (for though the words are Ximena's the thoughts were her own,)—it may be believed that it had deepened before she reached that period, to use her own words, "deep affections and deep sorrows seemed to have solemnized her whole being." But though she then, as formerly, took pleasure in contemplating the resting-place, the shelter, the change from a harsh world to the home where

"no sorrow dims the air,"

she suffered from none of the morbid impatience of life which, through their works, is to be traced in the minds of those who have had so many fewer reasons, mental and bodily, to pray for release. To speak fancifully, she seemed to find in every object around her, a type of the bright and better land to come, which enhanced and gave a significance to its beauty. This state of feeling is remarkably expressed in a Poem already mentioned—her "Poet's Dying Hymn," which as faithfully reflects the more tranquil current of her later thoughts, as the "Mozart's Requiem" breathed the feverish and uncurbed aspirings of former years. After many high-toned verses, there is a great charm in the gentle yet melancholy resignation of those that follow.

"Now thou art calling me in every gale,
Each sound and token of the dying day:
Thou leav'st me not, though early life grows pale,
I am not darkly sinking to decay—

But, hour by hour, my soul's dissolving shroud
Melts off to radiance, as a silvery cloud—
I bless thee, O my God!

And if this earth, with all its choral streams,
And crowning woods, and soft and solemn skies,
And mountain sanctuaries for poet's dreams,
Be lovely still in my departing eyes:
'Tis not that fondly I would linger here,
But that thy foot-prints in its dust appear—
I bless thee, O my God!

And that the tender shadowing I behold,
The tracery veining every leaf and flower,
Of glories cast in more consummate mould,
No longer vassals to the changeful hour;
That life's last roses to my thoughts can bring
Rich visions of imperishable spring;
I bless thee, O my God!

Yes! the young vernal voices in the skies
Woo me not back, but, wandering past mine ear,
Seem heralds of th' eternal melodies,
The spirit-music, imperturb'd and clear;
The full of soul, yet passionate no more—
Let *me*, too, joining those pure strains, adore!
I bless thee, O my God!

Now aid, sustain me still! To thee I come,
Make thou my dwelling where my children are,
And for the hope of that immortal home,
And for thy Son, the bright and morning star;
The sufferer and the Victor-King of death—
I bless thee with my glad song's dying breath!
I bless thee, O my God!"

The illness to which Mrs. Hemans refers in the last extracts, was the scarlet fever. Her recovery was imperfect, and her extraordinary personal carelessness, in addition to retarding it, superinduced another disorder, the ague, which never left her, till it was succeeded and outgrown by her last fatal malady. In the interval of partial convalescence, however, which succeeded the fever, her mind seemed to awake to more than its usual vigour: she was never so full of projects as at this period—never so happy in the exercise of those powers, over which she had gained full mastery. Her interest in the things of life, in books, and works of art, had never been more vivid, as the following extracts from her familiar correspondence,—almost the last which can be given,—abundantly testify.

Sept. 12th, 1834.

. . . . . "You will now, perhaps, wish for some little account of my employments and studies. As I laid aside my writing entirely (for an interval of repose) about the time of your departure, I can only tell you of several books which I have read with strong and varied interest. Amongst the chief of these has been the Correspondence of Bishop Jebb with Mr. Knox, which presents I think, the most beautiful picture ever developed of a noble Christian friendship, brightening on and on into 'the perfect day,' through an uninterrupted period of thirty years. Knox's part of the correspondence is extremely rich in original thought, and the highest views of enlightened Christian philosophy; there is much elegance, 'pure religion,' and refined intellectual taste in the Bishop's letters also, but his mind is decidedly inferior both in fervour and power. Another work with which I have been both impressed and delighted, is one which I strongly recommend you to procure. It is the 'Prigioni,' of Silvio Pellico, a distinguished young Italian poet, who incurred the suspicions of the Austrian government, and was condemned to the penalty of the *carcere duro* during ten years, of which this most interesting work contains the narrative. It is deeply affecting from the *heart-springing* eloquence with which he narrates his varied sufferings: what forms, however, the great charm of the work, is the gradual and almost unconsciously-revealed exaltation of the sufferer's character, spiritualized through suffering into the purest Christian excellence. It is beautiful to see the lessons of trust in God and love to mankind brought out more and more into shining light from the death of the dungeon-gloom, and all this crowned at last by the release of the noble all-forgiving captive, and his restoration to his aged father and mother, whose venerable faces seem perpetually to have haunted the solitude of his cell. The book is written in the most classic Italian, in one small volume, and will, I am sure, be one to afford you lasting delight." . . . .

From a letter to her sister.

Sept. 18th, 1834.

. . . . . "I thought you would be interested in the two sonnets* which are copied on the first page. I wrote them

* The Sonnets to "Silvio Pellico upon reading his '*Prigioni*,'" and "To the same released," published among the "Poetical Remains."

only a few days ago, (almost the first awakening of my spirit, indeed, after a long sickness,) upon reading that delightful book of Pellico's which I procured in consequence of what you had told me of it. I know not when I have read anything which has so deeply impressed me. The gradual brightening of heart and soul into the 'perfect day' of Christian excellence, through all those fiery trials, presents, I think, one of the most touching, as well as instructing pictures ever contemplated. How beautiful is the scene between him and Oroboni, in which they mutually engage not to shrink from the avowal of their faith, should they ever return into the world! But I could say so much on this subject, which has quite taken hold of my thoughts, that it would lead me to fill up my whole letter. . . . . A friend kindly brought me yesterday the Saturday Magazine, containing Coleridge's letter to his god-child. It is, indeed, most beautiful, and coming from that sovereign intellect ought to be received as an invaluable record of faith and humility. It is scarcely possible to read it without tears!" . . .

"Sept. 19th, 1834.

"My dear ——,

"I should have written immediately to you on Carl's return, but that he told me something of a packet of books which you were about to forward in a day or two, and the arrival of which he was to acknowledge, and I thought it would be best to send you a long united letter from us both. I can, however, no longer delay expressing to you my delightful surprise upon opening your precious gift of remembrance, for which I beg you to accept, though too late offered my warmest thanks. This last noble production of Retszch's* was quite new to me, and you may imagine with how many bright associations of friendship and poesy, every leaf of it is teeming for me. Again and again have I recurred to its beauty-embodied thoughts, and ever with the freshness of a new delight. The volume, too, is so rich in materials for sweet and bitter fancies, that to an imaginative nature it would be invaluable, were it for this alone. But how imbued is it throughout with grace, the delicate, spiritual grace breathed from the domestic affections in the full play of their tenderness! I look upon

* His outlines to Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

it truly as a *religious* work, for it contains scarcely a design in which the eternal alliance between the human soul and its Creator is not shadowed forth by devotional expression. How admirably does this manifest itself in the group of the christening, the—*first* scene of the betrothed lovers, with their uplifted eyes of speechless happiness; and, above all, in that exquisite group, representing the father counting over his beloved heads after the conflagration! I was much impressed, too, by that most poetic vision at the close, where the mighty bell, no more to proclaim the tidings of human weal or wo, is lying amidst ruins, and half mantled over by a veil of weeds and wild flowers. What a profusion of external beauty but above all, what a deep 'inwardness of meaning' there is in all these speaking things! Indeed, my dear friend, you have bestowed upon me a treasure to thought, to imagination, to all kindly feeling, and be assured of its being valued at its fullest worth. . . . Have you read Silvio Pellico's narrative of his '*Prigioni*?' it has lately interested me most deeply: how beautiful a picture is presented by the gradual expansion of the sufferer's mind under all its fiery trials to more and more all-enduring charity, tenderness, and toleration! I have read it more than once, so powerful has been its effect upon my feelings. When the weary struggle with wrong and injustice leads to such results, I then feel that the *fearful mystery of life is solved for me.*

"May I trouble you with a little commission! I am anxious to procure those two very small American volumes of my poems, which contain almost all I have written as far as the 'Forest Sanctuary.' If you could obtain them for me I should be particularly obliged. . . . . You will not be quite satisfied with this letter unless I tell you something of my health. The scarlet fever has left me with a very great susceptibility to cold; but if I can overcome this by care, I really think (and my physicians think also) that my constitution seems now to give promise of improvement. . . . . If God ever grants me something of domestic peace and protection, it will be received as a blessing for which all my future life would be *one hymn* of thankfulness and joy. This subject saddens me, therefore it is well that I have no room left to dwell upon it.

"Ever believe me,

"Most faithfully yours,

"F. H."

CHAPTER XVI.

Increase of illness — Mrs. Hemans' calmness and resignation— "Thoughts during sickness' —"Despondency and Aspiration" —Projected poem—"Antique Greek Lament"—Removal to Redesdale—Last extract from her correspondence—Appointment of her son—Her cheerfulness—Messages to her friends—Her love of books—Further notice of her last hours—Conclusion.

THE hope expressed in the last letter proved, alas! delusive: the partial return of strength, from which Mrs. Hemans augured the possibility, if not the promise, of a favourable change in her constitution, was but the last fitful quivering of the flame of life, before it expired. A neglected cold, caught (as has been already mentioned) when she was but imperfectly recovered from the scarlet fever, took the distressing form of ague: and from that time forward her strength and health declined steadily. The increasing weakness of her frame made it impossible for her to throw off this disorder, which was succeeded by a dropsical affection.

It would be fruitlessly distressing to dwell upon the scenes of pain, and prostration, and decay, which closed her career, had the mind of the sufferer yielded with the body, and sunk into the arms of death with as much agony and as wearily as its mortal tabernacle. Not only, however, were its powers of conception and fancy undiminished, but it seemed to gain patience and tranquillity in proportion as disease advanced;—to cling with a more entire and confiding reliance to the faith which had calmed its tumults, and taught it to anchor its hopes upon the One "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Her thoughts and imaginations, during the first stage of her illness, were recorded by Mrs. Hemans in a series of sonnets, entitled "Thoughts during Sickness," which were intended as a sequel to a previous collection, the "Records of the Autumn." The "Thoughts," —unaccountably omitted in the "Poetical Remains"—were published in the New Monthly Magazine for March, 1835. They are intensely individual. One of them on Retzsch's

design of the "Angel of Death," was suggested by an impressive description in Mrs. Jameson's "Visits and Sketches." In another, she speculates earnestly and reverently upon the direction of the flight of the spirit, when the soul and body shall part: in others, again, she recurs tenderly to the haunts and pleasures of childhood, which had, of late, been present to her memory with more than usual force and freshness. To these the following sonnet refers, dated May, 1834; which as far as I am aware, has not hitherto been published.

"A HAPPY HOUR.

"Oh! what a joy, to feel that in my breast
The founts of childhood's vernal fancies lay
Still pure, though heavily and long repressed
By early-blighted leaves, which o'er their way
Dark summer-storms had heaped—but free, glad play
Once more was given them:—to the sunshine's glow,
And the sweet wood-song's penetrating flow,
And to the wandering primrose-breath of May,
And the rich hawthorn odours, forth they sprung,—
Oh! not less freshly bright, that *now* a thought
Of spiritual presence o'er them hung,
And of immortal life!—a germ, unwrought
In childhood's soul to power—now strong, serene,
And full of love and light, colouring the whole blest scene."

"Her intense love of nature," writes her sister, "seemed to gain strength even as the sorrowful conviction was more and more pressed upon us, that upon the fair scenes of *this* world, her eyes were never more to dwell. One of the sonnets in question (the "Thoughts") will far better express her feelings than any language of mine."

"O Nature! thou didst rear me for thine own,
With thy free singing-birds and mountain brooks,
Feeding my thoughts in primrose-haunted nooks
With fairy phantasies, and wood-dreams alone.
And thou didst teach me every wandering tone
Drawn from the many whispering trees and waves,
And guide my step to founts and starry caves,
And where bright mosses wove thee a rich throne
'Midst the green hills;—and now that, far estranged
From all sweet sounds and odours of thy breath,
Fading I lie, within my heart unchanged
So glows the love of thee, that not for death
Seems that pure passion's fervour—but ordained
To meet on brighter shores, thy majesty unstained."

It was after the first violence of her illness had somewhat abated, that Mrs. Hemans commenced her noble lyric, "Despondency and Aspiration."* She was more than usually anxious to concentrate all her powers in this poem. When a second attack, which again greatly reduced her strength, for a while subsided, leaving her free from pain, she addressed herself to completing it without delay; and, when it was finished, expressed for the first time, something like a presentiment of her approaching departure. "I felt anxious," she said, "to finish it, for whilst I was so ill, I thought it might be my last work, and I wished if I could, to make it my best." Her wish was granted in its fullest extent: this ode, which concludes and crowns so long a line of beautiful and eloquent poems, rises higher in its aim, its imagery, and its versification, than any of its predecessors. She designed (for the plans and projects of life did not loosen their hold upon her busy mind, till the Shadow, as it were, stood on the threshhold) to make it the prologue to a poetical work which was to be called "The Christian Temple." The idea of such an undertaking had been suggested to her by a recent perusal of Schiller's "Die Gotten Griechenlands," and it was her purpose, by tracing out the workings of passion—the struggles of human affection—through various climes, and ages, and conditions of life—to illustrate the insufficiency of any dispensation, save that of an all-embracing Christianity, to soothe the sorrows, or sustain the hopes, or fulfil the desires of an immortal being whose lot is cast in a world where cares and bereavements are many.

The "Antique Greek Lament"† with its plaintive burden,

"By the blue waters—the restless ocean waters,
Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!"

was the only poem of the series which was completed: for the project, with many others, was arrested by the progress of disease, which, before the winter closed in, had assumed an alarming and unequivocal aspect. It was hoped, however, that change of air, and complete retirement, might still restore her. With this view Mrs. Hemans removed early in December to the summer residence of the Archbishop of Dublin, which was kiddly placed at her disposal; and, it would seem, derived a transient benefit from the change. But the following letter was traced with a faltering hand, and

* Published among the "Poetical Remains." † *Ibid.*

speaks, unconsciously, the language of melancholy presentiment.

"Redesdale, near Dublin, January 27th, 1835.

"My dear ——,

"I think you will be glad to see a few lines from myself, though I can only tell you that my recovery—if such it can be called—proceeds with disheartening slowness. I cannot possibly describe to you the subduing effect that long illness has produced upon my mind. I seem to have been passing through 'the valley of the shadow of death,' and all the vivid interests of life look dim and pale around me. I am still at the Archbishop's palace, where I receive kindness truly *heart-warm*. Never could any thing be more cordial than the strong interest he and his amiable wife have taken in my recovery.

"My dear —— has enjoyed his holidays here greatly, as I should have done too, (he has been so mild and affectionate,) but for constant pain and sickness.

. . . . . .

"This has fatigued me sadly.

"Believe me ever truly yours, "F. H."

"Do send my kind love to Miss ——, when you have an opportunity."

It was in the course of the following months, that the necessary exertion and excitement caused to Mrs. Hemans by the appointment of her fourth son to a situation in a government office, was succeeded by an exaggeration of every unfavourable symptom—a greater feebleness of frame, and an increase of dropsical affection. But she bore these not only placidly, but almost cheerfully: so deeply was she impressed by a sense of the public kindness which relieved her mind from a heavy care, and by the private act of generosity by which the nomination in question was accompanied. This —honourable to the giver, for its munificence, and for the delicacy with which it was tendered: honourable to the receiver, for the gratitude with which it was acknowledged—a gratitude unalloyed by false shame or servility—is a thing not to be passed over. It does the heart good to dwell upon such a proof that the cares of statesmanship do not of necessity destroy the gentler feelings of brotherly kindness and benevolence. In every note and letter which refers to this affair, Mrs. Hemans is described as speaking of

it as "a sunshine without a cloud;"—she now felt that her days were numbered, and it must indeed have been soothing to her, to receive so effectual an assurance that she possessed friends—unknown as well as known—willing and active to advance the fortunes of those whom she was so soon to leave for ever!

The desired improvement in her health not having taken place, it was thought prudent to remove her to Dublin early in March, in order that she might be nearer to her physicians. By this time, she had almost entirely lost the use of her limbs, and though not wholly confined to bed, was scarcely equal even to the exertion of reading. She was therefore entirely thrown upon the resources of her own mind: "but never," says her companion during these days, "did I perceive it overshadowed by gloom. The manner in which she endured pain—and this, during the earlier stages of her illness, was very severe—surprised even me. She never murmured or expressed the slightest impatience at its long continuance. I remember her saying to me once, in a moment of unusual anguish, 'that she hoped *I* should never be subject to what she was then enduring,' but this was the utmost of her complaints." During these severest periods of her disorder, she was sometimes delirious—and it was remarkable to observe, from the incoherent words she uttered, how entirely the Beautiful still retained its predominance over her mind. As an illustrative anecdote, I may mention that one of her last casual visitors introduced into her sick chamber at her own express request, was Giulio Regondi, the boy-guitarist—in whom she had been more than usually interested—not merely by the extraordinary musical genius and acquirement, which place him so far above the common range of youthful prodigies—but for that simplicity and cheerfulness of nature, which rarely remain unspotted in those, like him, perilously exposed to the flattery and caresses of the world, at an early age.

Throughout the whole of Mrs. Hemans' illness, she was visited by vivid and delightful dreams, to which, and to the quietness of her slumber, she often thankfully referred: and in answer to the sympathy expressed by the few admitted to her presence, who were distressed to see the melancholy state in which she was lying, she would say, "that she had no need of pity, that she lived in a fair and happy world of her own, among gentle thoughts and pleasant images, which were suffi-

cient to her cheerfulness." When haunted by the promptings of too quick a conscience, which suggested to her, that her life and talents had not been rended useful to their fullest extent, she would console herself with that beautiful line of Milton's,

"Those also serve, who only stand and wait."

She spoke often of the far-away friends whom she valued, and would send them messages of kindness and comfort; she was anxious that one (Miss Mitford) should be told of the delight which her country scenes and sketches had given her; —that another, the companion of her graver hours, should be assured that "the tenderness and affectionateness of the Redeemer's character which they have often contemplated together, was now a source not merely of reliance, but of positive happiness to her—*the sweetness of her couch.*" In short, during this season of decline, she was resigned, humble, most studious to avoid saying or doing any thing which might seem said or done for effect, and invested by her patience and sweetness with a dignity which almost raised her above the reach of earthly consolation. The feeling can be well understood which made her sister write, "that at times it has almost been painful to feel one's own incapacity to minister to a spirit so etherialised."

Towards the close of March, her malady took one of those capricious turns upon which the sanguine are so apt to found hopes; and which tempt the sufferer, from feeling a momentary relief, to imagine that a restoration to health is not utterly beyond possibility. At this time, her sister, who had been in attendance upon her for some weeks, left her, recalled to Wales by imperative domestic claims:—her youngest brother and her sister-in-law remained with her till she died. But the change was of short duration; the letters and notes before me only detail the return and progress of disease, and soon cease to speak of a hope,—*a chance.** Her relations had now only to stand by and await the release of a spirit, ready, if not impatient, to depart:—of one whose life had been

* I have purposely refrained from dwelling upon the minute particulars of Mrs. Hemans' case; these have been sufficiently given in the "Recollections," by Mr. Lawrence, to which reference has already been made.

troubled and storm-beaten, but whose death-bed was calm and most affectionately tended.

It now remains for me to add a few more notices of the last solemn hours of life; for these I am indebted to her youngest son. "After all the more painful part of her illness had subsided, she sunk into a calm and gradual state of decline: I may safely say, that I never in my life saw her so happy and serene as then. Her love of books became stronger than ever." It has been already told, in her own words, that her love of flowers remained equally strong till death. "She would have a little table placed by her bed-side, covered with volumes, one of which would lie open before her, even when she was unable to read—and she liked to be read to—for though frequently she could not comprehend what she heard, the sound of words seemed to lull her to placid slumber. The latest volume of Wordsworth's poems, which was brought to her about this time, excited in her the strongest interest; and she returned, after an absence and forgetfulness of many years, to the old pleasure, which, when very young, she had taken in the writings of Bowles; the quiet beauty of whose poetry seemed very congenial to her present state of mind. Almost the last book which she turned over with any appearance of interest, was Gilpin's "Forest Scenery."

Within a short period of her decease, the dropsical symptoms abated; they were succeeded by hectic fever and delirium, the sure precursors of dissolution. On the twenty-sixth day of April she closed her poetical career, by dictating the "Sabbath Sonnet," which will be read and remembered as long as her name is loved and cherished. From this time she sank away gently but steadily,—still able to derive pleasure from being occasionally read to, and on Tuesday, the twelfth of May, still able to read for herself a portion of the sixteenth chapter of St. John, her favorite among the Evangelists. Nearly the last words she was heard to utter were, on Saturday the sixteenth of May, to ask her youngest son, then sitting by her bed-side, what he was reading. When he told her the name of the book, she said, "Well, do you like it?" After this she fell into a gentle sleep, which continued almost unbroken, till evening, when, between the hours of eight and nine, her spirit passed away without a sigh or a struggle.

She was buried in a grave within St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street, close to the house in which she died; the funeral

service being performed over her remains by the Rev. Dr. Dickson, the Archbishop's Chaplain, from whom she had received the sacrament on the evening of the seventeenth of March. There is, as yet, no monument erected to her, save a tablet in the cathedral of St. Asaph, placed there by her brothers, "in memory of Felicia Hemans, whose character is best portrayed in her writings."

An elaborate summary of the principal features of Mrs. Hemans' character, or of the general and individual merits of her poems, can hardly be necessary, if the foregoing memorials have fulfilled the design of their editor. The woman and the poetess were in her too inseparably united to admit of their being considered apart from each other. In her private letters, as in her published works, she shows herself high-minded, affectionate, grateful—wayward in her self-neglect,—delicate to fastidiousness in her tastes; in her religion, fervent without intolerance; eager to acquire knowledge, as eager to impart it to others,—earnestly devoted to her art, and in that art to the service of all things beautiful and noble and holy. She may have fallen short of some of her predecessors in vigor of mind, of some of her contemporaries in variety of fancy; but she surpassed them all in the use of language, in the employment of a rich, chaste, and glowing imagery, and in the perfect music of her versification. It will be long before the chasm left in our female literature by her death will be worthily filled; she will be long remembered,—long spoken of by those who knew her works, yet longer by those who knew herself—

> Kindly and gently, but as of one,
> For whom 'tis well to be fled and gone,
> As of a bird from a chain unbound,
> As of a wanderer whose home is found.
> So let it be!

APPENDIX.

Since these Memorials have been completed, I have received notices of two poems, written by Mrs. Hemans during her residence in Wales, of which no mention is made in any of her letters, nor any published trace to be found. The one was entitled "The Secret Tribunal," the other, the work of a later period, was a dramatic poem, called "The Crusaders," in which the popular ballad of "The Captive Knight" was introduced. The manuscript of this last was unaccountably lost, or destroyed. Should it ever be recovered, it might serve as the nucleus of a second volume of "Poetical Remains."

THE END.

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